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THE CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
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POLICY CONCEPTS

THE COOPERS & LYBRAND CONSULTING GROUP

Employability Resources Network

The Employability Resources Network (ERN) is a three-year demonstration project funded by Employment and Immigration Canada under the Innovations program.

ERN is the responsibility of three organizations: The Canadian Council on Social Development, The Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group, and The Norton Group.

ERN's purpose is to explore and evaluate methods for helping unemployed people get off social assistance and back into the job market, through employability programs currently under way across Canada.

ERN will select at least 10 to 15 demonstration projects for an in-depth evaluation of the different approaches used to help social assistance recipients and others re-enter the labour force. It will assess the projects' effectiveness for different groups, such as older unemployed workers, women, native people, disabled persons, visible minorities and youth.

ERN will establish a standardized framework for evaluating employability enhancement projects. The framework will provide useful information not only for government policy-makers, but also for business, social service and employment agencies, and program administrators.

ERN will develop an information resource centre. It will include an inventory of national and international employment projects, an evalution data base and a documentation library. A communications network will serve organizations and individuals in the employment enhancement field.

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Ressources pour l'amélioration des possibilités d'emploi

Le projet Ressources pour l'amélioration des possibilités d'emploi (RAMPE) est un projet témoin d'une durée de trois ans financé par Emploi et Immigration Canada dans le cadre du programme Innovations.

Trois organisations assument la responsabilité de RAMPE : le Conseil canadien de Développement social, Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group et Le Norton Group.

Le mandat de RAMPE est d'explorer et d'évaluer, dans le cadre de programmes d'amélioration des possibilitiés d'emploi ayant cours dans l'ensemble du Canada, différentes formules pouvant aider les chômeurs à se soustraire à l'aide sociale et à réintégrer le marché du travail.

RAMPE sélectionnera dix à quinze projets témoins pour évaluer minutieusement les différentes stratégies favorisant la réinsertion des assistés sociaux et d'autres personnes sur le marché du travail. Il appréciera l'efficacité des projets visant différents groupes tels que les chômeurs d'un certain âge, les femmes, les autochtones, les handicapés, les minorités visibles et les jeunes.

RAMPE élaborera un schéma d'évaluation destiné aux projets d'amélioration des débouchés. Ce schéma fournira des renseignements utiles non seulement aux décideurs politiques du gouvernement, mais aussi aux entreprises, aux organismes de services sociaux et d'emploi, et aux administrateurs de programmes.

RAMPE créera également un centre national de documentation. Celui-ci comprendra l'inventaire des programmes d'amélioration des perspectives d'emploi mis en place au Canada et à l'étranger, une base de données sur l'évaluation et un centre de documentation. Un réseau de communication sera à la disposition des organismes et des particuliers qui s'occupent de l'amélioration des perspectives d'emploi.

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EVALUATION OF THE ATIRA SINGLE PARENT PROGRAM

Final Report

July, 1991

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The overall objective of the Atira Single Parent Program is "to provide single parent women with the skills and training necessary to make the transition from home and social assistance, to the workplace or educational institution." Programs are 7 months in duration, during which time participants receive (1) Lifeskills/communication skills training, (2) On the job work experience (3) Job Search Training, and (4) Upgrading in Mathematics and English, and G.E.D. Preparation (preparation for writing the Grade 12 equivalency exam). As well, participants may choose to take a specialized training course, or university courses while in training.

To be eligible for the Program an applicant must be: 1) A single parent 2) Eligible to receive, or be receiving social assistance 3) Not currently working full-time, and 4) Experiencing difficulty obtaining paid work.

Since the Atira Single Parent Program deals predominantly with social assistance recipients it is possible to evaluate the extent to which employability was enhanced within the context of the core issues established by the Employability Resource Network. These issues are outlined in Exhibit 1.

Goals of the Atira Single Parent Program

In pursuing its objective, the Atira Single Parent Program has developed the following goals:

1) To select suitable women for the Program.

2) To enhance social skills and job skill development.

3) To enhance participants' self-esteem.

4) To provide academic upgrading.

5) To provide on-the-job training or specialized academic training.

6) To gather program related data.

92-03785/

Program Design

The Atira Single Parent Program was conceived, developed and implemented by the two principals of Atira Consulting Inc., Phyllis Chuly and Arlene Franko. Atira Consulting has provided employability enhancement programs for women since 1986, and also delivers other programs, seminars and briefs on employment and poverty issues, especially as they relate to women.

After conducting a survey focusing on the needs of this group of unemployed women, a model for program delivery was developed in consultation with women's groups in Saskatchewan. A pilot program was developed and introduced in the rural community of Watrous and was followed by two additional rural training programs. All three rural programs contained a component which focused on starting a small business. Central to these programs was the use of a group discussion format which concentrated on bringing out individual strengths.

In September 1990, Atira Consulting started its fifth single parent training program in Regina. The components and features of the Atira Single Parent Training Program have remained much the same throughout its four year history. However staff emphasize the importance of conducting individual assessments of participants, and assisting them in developing an individualized training and career plan. The group discussion and problem-solving format has remained central to the Atira Single Parent Program.

The basic elements of the Atira Single Parent Program are:

- An initial 1-day orientation;
- Lifeskills/communication skills training, 3 days a week for the first 15 weeks;
- Upgrading in Mathematics and English; 1 day a week for the first 15 weeks;
- "World of Work" presentations and discussions, 1 day a week, every Friday, for the whole length of the training;
- G.E.D. preparation, 2 days a week for the last 15 weeks of the Program (except for the last week) for those women who do not already have their Grade 12;
- Training on the job, one day a week through weeks 11 to 16, followed by two to four days during weeks 18 through 29; and,
- Job Search Preparation, final week.

When a training program is being conducted, the Atira Single Parent Program employs a staff of two coordinators, two lifeskills instructors, one teacher, and a secretary/receptionist, who also provides services to the Atira Resource Centre. Through the Resource Centre, Atira Consulting provides support and follow-up to single parent women who are employed or looking for employment.

Issues and Conclusions

The conclusions associated with each of the nine evaluation issues researched in this evaluation are summarized in the exhibits in the following pages.

1. Did the Program assist Participants in:

Obtaining Employment?
Maintaining Employment?

Survey data shows that 76.4% (n = 42) of surveyed respondents had been previously employed but that only 3 respondents were working for pay in the year preceding their application to Atira. On average participants had been unemployed for 3.83 years prior to attending Atira.

The Program assisted participants in obtaining employment - 30 obtained jobs within six months of completing the Program, as well as maintaining employment - of these, 17 have worked continuously for periods extending from six to 30 months. Of the first jobs obtained by participants after the Program, 15 were reported to be full-time. Currently, 18 participants are working full-time (one of whom is occupying as full-time temporary position). There is indication that participants are motivated to become financially independent as is reflected by the fact that three respondents at the time of the study were holding two jobs concurrently.

2. Did the Program End/Reduce Participants' Dependence on Social Allowance?

Yes. Questionnaire data reveals that more than 60% of Atira participants, over the six month period following the Program broke their dependence on social assistance. Fifty-three participants reported social assistance as their primary source of income in the six month period before Atira, whereas 20 reported receiving social assistance payments in the six month period after Atira. For those continuing to receive social assistance the amount did not change significantly.

3. Did the Program Strengthen Participants' Personal Sense of Employment Readiness?

Yes. Atira participants regarded family responsibilities, lack of experience, the inability to know what kind of job they want, and lack of job search skills as key barriers to finding employment before Atira. Poor wages and family responsibilities were cited as barriers to maintaining employment. Study results indicate that the Program improved participants' ability to deal with these, and other barriers to employment. Findings also show Atira staff playing a significant role in assisting participants in becoming aware and pursuing further educational opportunities.

4. Did the Program Improve Participants Financial Situation?

This program can be considered somewhat successful in raising the level of income of its participants. Of the participants surveyed 67.3% reported their personal monthly income was **more now** than in the six months before Atira. Thirty-seven participants report currently being employed and 37 respondents stated they felt "better off financially now than in the six months immediately before Atira." This perception of feeling financially better off after the Program is attributed to their positive feeling of being employed in the paid labour force - and less dependent on social assistance - as well as positive feelings about the Program.

5. Did the Program Strengthen Participants Self-Esteem?

Yes. In the telephone survey and in-person interviews participants overwhelmingly reported an increased sense of self-esteem following completion of the Atira Single Parent Program. Survey findings show this heightened self-esteem has a positive impact on other aspects of their lives, including improved relationships with other family members, friends and peers, as well as employment.

6. Did the Program Assist Participants in Furthering their Education?

Findings from the telephone survey and in-person interviews show that Atira assisted about one-third of its participants in obtaining their Grade 12 equivalency (G.E.D). Also, the Program was instrumental in assisting respondents to take additional training during and after Atira. To date, the additional training pursued has been of more marked benefit to participants who were already employed at the point of taking the training. At the time of the study 8 participants were enroled in educational programs on a full-time basis and reported it was "*too soon*" to

comment on how such training/educational programs will improve their employment prospects.

7. What were the Costs of the Program Compared to Social Assistance?

Since 56% of program entrants obtain work within 6 months, and since total annual social assistance for a typical group of 20 participants is $238,800 (20 x 12 x $995), the annual cost saving in social welfare is projected to be $133,728. This suggests a payback period of about 2.1 years. The project director estimates the payback period to be 1.7 years when women who pursue training are included.

8. What Interventions Contribute Most to Increasing Employability?

Program components that directly involved Atira staff received higher ratings: Respondents viewed the "Academic Upgrading" component as the most valuable component, followed by the "Support/follow-up" **after** training, and "Counselling from Staff" and the "Personal Development" component. The latter two components were assessed as equally valuable.

Qualitative data elicited from surveyed and interviewed participants suggest that all participants may not have benefitted equally from the "Personal Development" component. The personal counselling and support provided by Atira staff during and after the Program are seen as very effective. One qualification to this conclusion that some participants requested additional follow-up and support to enter the paid labour force.

9. Does the Program's Relationship with Other Agencies Increase its Effectiveness in Assisting Participants in Obtaining/Maintaining Employment?

The Program's relationship with other community agencies was not recognized to have a **direct** impact on its effectiveness in assisting participants in obtaining and maintaining employment. However the Program staff's ongoing interaction with representatives of other agencies was reported to assist participants in developing an awareness of resources that can help in movement to financial independence.

Recommendations

- Atira staff consider sending out "visible" information about upcoming Programs, (for example, posters) that could be easily displayed in waiting room areas and offices of social service agencies. This would provide more opportunity for women who are recipients of services from those agencies to have knowledge of the Program.

- That the Atira Program as part of its Intake Assessment Process continues to select women who are most in need of the "Support/Counselling" and "Personal Development" Program components. These components are clearly seen as valuable and effective, but Program aspects from which all participants may not be benefitting equally.

- That Atira examine and strengthen the Job Search component to increase the number of women who successfully obtain and maintain employment.

- That as part of the support/follow-up process the Atira Single Parent Program develop a systematized method of collecting data and documenting the needs of single parent women once they have completed training.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Atira Consulting, Inc. of Regina, develops and implements 30 week training programs which provide single parent women with lifeskills/communication skills training, academic upgrading in Mathematics and English and G.E.D. preparation, and work experience placements. The above are the basic components of the Program, but staff emphasize the importance of conducting individual assessments and assisting participants to develop individualized career goals. Support, counselling and advocacy are also key parts of the Atira Single Parent Program. Staff have incorporated into the Program's components, discussion and problem-solving that address the "personal" and "systemic" barriers encountered by single parent women entering or re-entering the labour force. Atira Consulting provides training under the Canadian Jobs Strategy. To qualify for the program women must be single parents who are receiving, or eligible to receive social allowances.

This document presents the findings of the evaluation study of the Atira Single Parent Program. This report and the previous evaluation assessment were prepared by Prairie Research Associates, Inc. in Winnipeg in consultation with The Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group.

Purpose of the Study

An Evaluation Assessment of the Atira Single Parent Program was carried out in October, 1990. Using the ERN approach, this assessment provided the basis for the evaluation study which was conducted in January, 1991.

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine whether the program developed by the Atira Single Parent Program is an efficient and effective way of enhancing the

EXHIBIT 1

COVERAGE OF ISSUES FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE ATIRA SINGLE PARENT PROGRAM

	Issues	Planned Data Coverage
1.	Did the Program assist participants: • in obtaining employment? • in maintaining employment?	H
2.	Did the Program end or reduce participants' dependence on social assistance?	H
3.	Did the Program strengthen the participants' personal sense of employment readiness?	H
4.	Did the Program improve the participants' financial situation?	M
5.	Did the Program strengthen participants' self-esteem?	H
6.	Did the Program assist participants in furthering their education?	H
7.	What were the costs of the Program compared to social assistance?	M
8.	What interventions contribute most to increasing employability?	H
9.	Does the Program's relationship with other agencies increase its effectiveness in assisting participants in obtaining / maintaining employment?	M

Coverage: H = High M = Medium L = Low

employability of single parent women. Based on an assessment of the nine issues identified in the Evaluation Assessment, this Evaluation Study provides an understanding of the impact of the various components of the training program on its participants. This study also examines Atira's relationships with community agencies and how this relationship impacts on Program participants.

Evaluation Objectives

Pursuant to the Evaluation Assessment and a decision by the ERN Evaluation Steering Committee, nine issues were determined to be of central importance in evaluating the Atira Single Parent Program. These issues are outlined in Exhibit 1, together with the quality of data used in assessing the issues.

Structure of the Report

This report is structured in the following manner:

- **Background**
  - Mission statement, objectives and benefits of ERN initiative.
  - A brief overview of the Atira Single Parent Program, including its objectives and activities.
- **Study Design**
  - A presentation of the different methodologies used to address the issues central to this evaluation.

- **Facts, Findings and Conclusions**

  - A profile of applicants to the Atira Single Parent Program is followed by a brief discussion of the barriers which are known to hinder the employability of single parent women from taking steps to obtain employment and achieve financial independence.

  - A discussion is presented of each evaluation issue and the research questions relevant to those issues. Information obtained during this study is presented in the context of the evaluation issues. Findings and conclusions, based on the analysis of the data, are introduced.

- **Summary**

  - An overall synopsis of this study.

- **Recommendations**

  - An outline of the recommendations proposed arising from the information obtained, and the conclusions reached following analysis of that data.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Ms. Phyllis Chuly and Ms. Arlene Franko, principals of Atira Consulting, for their assistance in all phases of the evaluation assessment and the evaluation of the Atira Single Parent Program. Their sharing of file information, as well as their insights on Atira's training programs, and its participants were most helpful. We also want to thank Ms. Madeline Day and Ms. Katherine McKay, Life Skills Coaches for

the Atira Single Parent Program for their input, and Ms. Sharon Treslan, Secretary, for her assistance in providing file data, and other additional information.

As well, we thank the participants of the Atira Single Parent Program who willingly discussed with us their experiences before, during and after training, and the applicants who did not participate but agreed to share with us information about themselves. Representatives from service agencies in Regina also volunteered their time to contribute their ideas and insights.

Data obtained in this evaluation would not have been possible without the above people. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Mission Statement of Employability Resources Network (ERN)

The Employability Resources Network (ERN) was undertaken to identify and promote effective ways of helping employment disadvantaged persons return to active participation in the labour market.

Objectives of ERN

The objectives of ERN are the following:

- To determine, through a comprehensive evaluation of a variety of initiatives, what approaches to enhancing the employability of disadvantaged workers, work best for whom.
- To demonstrate and test, using financial and technical assistance, approaches that are vital to enhancing the employability of disadvantaged workers.
- To develop and maintain a central information clearinghouse of employability enhancement techniques and materials. Contained in the clearinghouse are descriptions of Canadian and international projects and programs, contact people, evaluations and bibliographies.
- To synthesize recent experience and recommend to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (funder) and other governments, effective approaches for enhancing the employability of disadvantaged workers.

Benefits of ERN

ERN has been designed to provide a "return" in the form of information and assistance to key stakeholders. They include Employment and Immigration Canada, other labour market or social service departments, projects being evaluated and demonstration projects, as well as communities, groups and individuals working or interested in the training and

human resource development areas.

- Projects being evaluated will benefit from the objective examination of their services and outcomes for participants. Where appropriate, suggestions for alternate approaches or changes will be made.

- Senior governments will receive a synthesis of findings from evaluations, literature review and contacts with the employment community that will help in policy formulation and program development.

- Interested parties will also have access to a national clearinghouse of information on employment projects, programs, contact persons, and evaluations that will help in preparing funding submissions and in improving the quality of their services.

- Selected demonstration projects will be assisted to test innovative approaches.

PROFILE OF THE ATIRA SINGLE PARENT PROGRAM

History and Rationale

The Atira Single Parent Training Program was conceived, developed and implemented by the two principals of Atira Consulting Inc., Phyllis Chuly and Arlene Franko. Historically, Atira Consulting (previously known as WICCA) has provided employability enhancement programs for women since 1986. Atira Consulting also delivers other programs, seminars and briefs on employment and poverty issues, especially as they relate to women in urban and rural Saskatchewan.

After conducting a needs survey, a model for program delivery was developed in consultation with women's groups in Saskatchewan. The rural community of Watrous was chosen as the location for the demonstration project as: 1) There was a large population from which to draw in the area - over 2000. 2) The community was not solely agricultural based, and 3) Women in the area consistently reported the lack of job opportunities, and a lack of confidence, generally, especially in regard to an ability to

change their circumstances.

The training program in Watrous was offered to 30 rural women, and was followed by two additional rural training programs - one in Weyburn for 30 women, and one in Avonlea for 15 women. Unlike the subsequent urban programs, the rural programs contained a component which focused on starting a small business. Central to these programs was the use of the group format which concentrated on bringing out participants' individual strengths. The participant group process has remained central in training programs offered by Atira Consulting.

In March 1987, WICCA offered its first training program aimed exclusively for single women on social assistance. A study of this project (completed by Patricia Reichert, March 1988) noted its significance in two ways: 1) It was the first project in the province for single parent women on social assistance. 2) It was the first project in Regina developed under the SARS Accord.

At the time of this first urban program there were 13,921 families (families, not including "one-person cases") receiving social assistance in Regina. Of these, 9,465, almost 70%, were female headed single parent families, with 6,886 of these families being headed by women under 35. Atira was designed in response to the employment needs of these women.

Inherent in the decision to develop a training program for such women was the recognition that this group has specific barriers labour force participation: These include 1) low educational levels; 2) limited work experience and/or no recent work experience; 3) lack of confidence and self-esteem, and 4) family or personal difficulties.

Single parent women on social allowances also encounter systemic or structural barriers to entry or re-entry into paid labour. That is even if some of the "personal" difficulties

are removed, they still may have problems obtaining and maintaining employment. Systemic barriers to employment include: 1) Biases and stereotyped attitudes toward social assistance recipients and single parents; 2) Lack of appropriate child care facilities; 3) Economic obstacles faced both inside and outside the labour force. For example, if they do manage to obtain employment, single parents are likely to obtain employment at the minimum wage level, while at the same time losing some of the "benefits" (health and dental benefits) received while on social assistance. Such factors make it difficult to remain in the paid labour force. In the Program, participants are provided with alternative methods of coping, which are designed to empower them as individuals and increase their chances of succeeding in paid employment.

In September 1990, Atira Consulting started its fifth single parent program in Regina.

Overview of the Atira Single Parent Program

The overall objective of the Atira Single Parent Training Program is to provide single parent women with the skills and training necessary to make the transition from home and social assistance to the workplace or educational institution. In order to be eligible for the Program an applicant must be:

- A single parent;
- Eligible to receive, or be receiving social assistance;
- Not currently working full-time; and
- Experiencing difficulty obtaining paid work.

In pursuing its overall objective, the Atira Single Parent Program:

- Selects suitable women for the Program;
- Enhances participants' personal development and job skills;

- Enhances participants' self-esteem;
- Provides academic upgrading;
- Provides on-the-job training and/or specialized academic training; and
- Gathers program related data.

Program Design

Atira Consulting Inc. operates one training program a year, with each program lasting 30 weeks. The specific time focused on various components of the Program may vary slightly depending on the individual and collective needs of participants, but the following is an approximate breakdown of the Program and scheduled activities:

- One-day orientation on the first day;
- Lifeskills/communication skills training, 3 days a week for the first 15 weeks;
- Upgrading in Mathematics and English; 1 day a week for the first 15 weeks;
- "World of Work" presentations and discussions, 1 day a week, every Friday, for the whole length of the training;
- G.E.D. preparation, 2 days a week for the last 15 weeks (except for the last week) for those women who do not already have their Grade 12;
- Training on the Job, one day a week through weeks 11 to 16, followed by two days during weeks 18 through 29; and
- Job Search Preparation in the final week.

G.E.D preparation time is sometimes substituted for two extra days a week of work experience, depending on the participants' individual goals. As well as training on the job placements, participants may choose to take specialized training or university courses.

The "World of Work" program component includes presentations and discussions of

various work-related issues, career and educational opportunities, and job skills training.

Work placements are organized and arranged by the Program Coordinators with the intention of matching a placement to a participant's skills, interests and goals. Ideally a participant maintains one placement for the duration of the program. Often there will be two or three placements before a "fit" between placement, participant and work experience host is achieved.

Work experience hosts provide some training, as well as monitoring and evaluating participants placed with them. While it is hoped that successful placements will result in employment for participants placed there, there is no expectation placed on employers to hire them.

The Atira Single Parent Program relies on four methods to recruit applicants:
1) Following approval of the provincial Human Rights Commission to advertise for applicants based on specific criteria, the Program advertises in a local newspaper at the start of each recruitment process. 2) Local social service agencies are notified when a program is being planned so they can refer women. 3) As well the Program receives many "word of mouth" referrals. 4) As part of each new recruitment process, those women on the waiting list are sent an application, and a letter encouraging them to apply. They are not given any preference in the selection process. This recruitment process produces a waiting list of about 60 applicants.

As discussed previously criteria for selection is based on applicants 1) Being single mothers, 2) Who are receiving, or eligible to receive social allowances, 3) Who are not working full-time, and, 4) Experiencing difficulty obtaining paid work.

When individuals phone the Program they are invited to apply in person. Over the phone some brief preliminary screening occurs, and applicants are invited back to a second

meeting.

A second meeting occurs in a group format (usually in groups of about 20) and serves several important purposes: First, applicants receive an orientation to the program. They are acquainted with Program staff and other prospective participants, and learn what is expected should they be accepted into the Program. This meeting helps applicants appraise their own readiness for the Program. It also allows staff to further assess applicants' commitment, motivation, and their ability to work and learn in a group. On occasion the coordinators may assess a woman on an individual basis, rather than as part of a group. This is usually done if applicants are interviewed after the program has already begun (for example, if a selected applicant has withdrawn). It is particularly important to determine how applicants interact in a group as the group process is an integral part of the training process.

Following group orientations, staff formally assess the applications in terms of the criteria discussed above. Once this has been done selected women are referred to Employment and Immigration Canada to determine their official eligibility for the Program.

Resources

Atira Consulting operates the Atira Single Parent Program and the Atira Resource Centre out of a three-storey rented house in central Regina. This facility provides space to conduct the various training components, and the opportunity to break into smaller groups, or to meet with participants individually.

The Program is equipped with two leased computers and other office and classroom equipment. The Program also leases video equipment, which is used extensively as a learning tool in training.

Funding for the Program is based on proposals submitted and accepted under the conditions of the Canadian Jobs Strategy. With funding received, the Program employs

two coordinators on a full-time contractual basis. The Program employs a qualified teacher for one day a week for a 15 week period, and two lifeskills coaches three days a week, during the first 15 weeks of the training program. Atira Consulting also employs a part-time secretary/receptionist who provides clerical support to the Program and the Resource Centre. The Program also receives funding which allows its coordinators to contract with community resource people or consultants to conduct presentations and discussions on special issues as part of the training program. Psychological consultation is available to the Program on an as need basis.

Appendix 1 describes the human resources of the program in more detail.

Program Accountability

Program accountability is maintained through contact with Employment and Immigration Canada, which receives ongoing reports on the status of participants. The program maintains detailed financial records and information is retained on participants while they are in training. As well, the Program mails biannual notices to past participants, about upcoming events and other information of common interest. Both these mail-outs and the recently funded Resource Centre enables more consistent follow-up than previous programs.

Participant feedback has always been an important and ongoing part of the accountability process for Atira. Participants evaluate the program informally, through individual and group discussions. Written evaluations are completed at the end of the Program. Comments from participants are considered to be very important, as the data are examined to insure the Program is responsive to participant needs.

ATIRA SINGLE PARENT PROGRAM

OBJECTIVE

To provide single parent women with the skills and training necessary to make the transition from home, and social assistance, to the workplace or educational institution

Goals

- To Select Suitable Women for the Program
- To Enhance Personal Development and Career Planning
- To Enhance Participant's Self-esteem
- To Provide Academic Upgrading
- To Provide On-the-job and / or Specialized Training
- To Gather Program Related Data

Activities

- Intake and Screening
- Presentations and Discussions Using Group Format
- Counselling, Advocacy, Support
- In-class Training and Night School Classes
- Placement and Monitoring
- Data Collection

Outputs

Number of:
- Newspaper advertisements
- Agencies contacted
- "Waiting lists" contacted
- Program introduction meetings (group format)

Assessment of:
- Applicants ability to work in a group

Referrals of:
- Selected applicants referred to EIC
- Other applicants informally counselled/referred elsewhere

Number of students receiving:
- Lifeskills / communication training
- Info re: community resources/career opportunities
- Group problem-solving training
- Discussion of work-related issues
- Career exploration
- Resume preparation skills
- Job search skills
- Interview skills

Number of participants receiving:
- Ongoing counselling / support on ad hoc basis
- Interviews on semi-monthly basis
- Referrals out as required
- Number of interventions with other system on participant's behalf

Number of participants receiving:
- Special educational seminars / presentations
- Assessments of: academic level

Those requiring upgrading receive:
- Math upgrading
- English upgrading
- GED Testing/Preparation
- Post-secondary opportunities expanded
- Number of participants enroled in part-time courses

- Number of interest tests administered
- Development of individual career goals

Number of:
- Employees oriented to program
- Work training placements arranged
- On-the-job performance evaluation
- Ongoing contacts with employees, program and participants

Number of:
- Program statistics / financial records maintained
- Ongoing meetings with funders
- Regular staff meetings
- Regular individual meetings with participants
- Ongoing evaluation of program by participants
- External evaluations of program (1988)
- Discussions with employer
- Follow-up former participants through resource centre and mailouts

Impacts & Effects (Immediate)

- Proper clients screened in/out
- Participant's awareness of program increased
- Applicants aware of program responsibilities
- Applicants "connect" with staff
- Applicants introduced to the group process

- Lifeskills/problem-solving skills enhanced
- Career expectations established
- Group cohesion developed / isolation broken down
- Job search skills enhanced
- Increased awareness of community resources

- Development of personal support system
- Increased ability to deal with short-term personal difficulties

- Improved academic knowledge
- Opportunity to obtain high school standing enhanced
- Increased access to post-secondary training and financing
- Additional specialized training obtained

- Participants acquire job skills experience
- Work problems dealt with in a timely manner

- Accountability requirements met
- Program adjusted to meet needs of participants
- Participants further empowered as their opinions are seen as important
- Program staff aware of former participants' status

Intermediate

- Screening responsibilities increased
- Informal counselling / referrels out increased

- Employability enhanced
- Self-confidence/self-esteem increased

- Increased placement success

Impacts & Effects (Long-term)

- Increased awareness of program in social service community

- Employment obtained / maintained or enrolment for further educational training
- Clients less reliant on social service system / able to function more independently

- Program increases visibility in community

- Program implemented consistently
- Programs reflect changing needs of participants

Logic Model

The Logic Model on the opposite page illustrates the structure of the Atira Single Parent Program. This model shows the linkages between program activities and expected immediate, intermediate and long-term impacts.

Success Indicators - A Reminder to the Reader

It should be noted that the primary success indicator of interest to ERN is employment. Consequently, our evaluations focus on this factor. However, this does not mean that other indicators, such as the pursuit of training or education in this case, is not also an indicator of success. It simply means that this evaluation is predominatly limited to the examination of one indicators of success. As such, the reader is reminded that Atira may also exhibit success in the face of other indicators which were beyond the scope of this evaluation.

EXHIBIT 2

ISSUES	LINES OF EVIDENCE				
	Data Review	Participant Survey	Survey of Non-Participants	Survey of Community Agencies	Case Studies
1. Did the Program assist participants in obtaining and maintaining employment?	•	•	•		•
2. Did the Program end/reduce participants' dependence on social allowance?		•	•		•
3. Did the Program strengthen participants' personal sense of employment readiness?		•	•		•
4. Did the Program improve the participants' financial situation?	•	•	•		•
5. Did the Program strengthen participants' self-esteem?		•	•		•
6. Did the Program assist participants in furthering their education?	•	•	•		•
7. What were the costs of the Program compared to income assistance?	•	•		•	•
8. What interventions contribute most to employability?		•			•
9. Does the Program's relationship with other agencies increase its effectiveness in assisting participants obtain and maintain employment?				•	•

3.0 STUDY DESIGN

The evaluation of the Atira Single Parent Program involved the collection of data from a number of different sources, and using a wide variety of different methods. Specifically evaluation data were obtained from:

- Interviews with Program staff;
- A review of the 258 of the Program's Intake "Information Sheets" completed by Program applicants;
- A telephone survey of 55 past Program participants;
- A telephone survey of 17 Program applicants who applied but did not participate in training;
- Case studies of 9 past Program participants; and,
- A telephone survey of 9 representatives from local community agencies with whom the Program has ongoing contact.

Exhibit 2, on the opposite page, outlines the nine central issues in this study, and the data sources employed to address these issues.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings and conclusions with respect to each of the evaluation issues.

A brief discussion of the instruments used in this study follows.

Interviews with Program Staff

Interviews were conducted with Phyllis Chuly and Arlene Franko, Coordinators of the Atira Single Parent Program, and Katherine McKay and Madeline Day, Lifeskills Coaches

in the Program. Information from these interviews, additional phone calls and written data provided by the Coordinators contributed greatly to the development of an understanding of the Atira Single Parent Program, its history, and the development of a frame of reference for this study.

Program Data Review

In establishing the parameters of this evaluation, it was determined that data would be gathered on the five Regina training programs conducted by Atira Consulting. Demographic information on participants and non-participants (applicants who had not been accepted for the Program) from Program #5, the program which is currently being conducted, was included in the administrative review. Those women, however were not included in the telephone surveys as the results of their program participation or non-participation could not be measured.

The Data Review provided the following information on Program applicants:

- Whether applicants went on to participate in the Program;
- Date of Application;
- Age at time of application;
- Grade level at time of application;
- Whether applicants were of aboriginal descent;
- Ages and number of dependents at time of application;
- Previous employment history, including last time applicants were employed in the paid labour force, number and types of jobs previously held, and length of time in the paid labour force;.
- Length of time applicants were receiving social assistance; and,

- Length of time applicants were single parents.

A review was conducted of 256 of the Program's Application Forms - 123 participant forms and 133 non-participant forms. This review contributed to the development of non-participant and participant profiles, and provided preliminary information on the following issues:

- Did the Program assist participants in obtaining and maintaining employment?
- Did the Program end/reduce participants' dependence on social assistance?
- Did the Program improve participants' financial situation?
- Did the Program assist participants in furthering their education?
- What were the costs of the Program compared to social allowances?

Telephone Survey of Participants

A telephone survey of past program participants was one of the primary sources of data collection for this evaluation. Participants were selected from lists compiled by Program staff. To alleviate some of the concerns that may have been felt about sharing personal information over the phone, a letter introducing the survey was sent to 106 former participants from Programs #1 through #4.

Following are the results of the follow-up to the letters:

- 13 letters were returned by Canada Post as undeliverable - subsequent attempts to contact these 13 past participants resulted in 5 agreeing to be interviewed;
- 55 participants agreed to complete the survey;

- 3 participants were unwilling to participate in the survey;
- 45 phone numbers were out of order, or were wrong numbers, suggesting that those participants had resided there, but that their numbers have since been changed and/or given to another party.

The participant telephone survey (see Appendix 2) provided data on Issues 1 through 8, that is, all the research issues in this study except for Issue 8, which relates more specifically to Atira's relationship with other agencies and programs and how this impacts on Program participants.

Telephone Survey of Non-Participants

A telephone survey of applicants who had not gone on to participate in the program, was also conducted. "Non-participants" were also selected from a list compiled by Atira staff. Introductory letters were sent to 89 non-participants from Programs #1 through #4. Following are the results of the follow-up:

- 24 letters were returned by Canada Post as undeliverable - subsequent attempts to contact these 24 past non-participants resulted in 3 agreeing to be interviewed;
- 15 participants agreed to complete the survey;
- 2 participants were unwilling to participate; and,
- 72 phone numbers were out of order, or were wrong numbers.

Due to the small number of non-participants that the evaluation team was successful in reaching, results were used to only provide supplemental data to this study.

The non-participant telephone questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3.

We were unable to reach a high percentage of Program applicants the evaluation team was unable to reach - 80.9% of non-participants and 39.9% of participants were unable to be contacted. Given the identified target group - single parent women, this is not unusual: It is expected that many have married - or remarried - during the last 4 year period, resulting their having assumed a new last name, and relocated. As well, Program staff report that many Atira applicants have histories of abuse, either being abused in their families of origin or by former spouses. For this and other reasons, many applicants have chosen to have unlisted numbers.

Survey of Community Agencies

In preliminary discussions with Program staff it was clear that much time is spent on supporting and advocating for single parent women while they are in the Atira Program. In many cases these activities are also conducted for women who never participated in the Program, or when women had completed training. To more closely address this "support/advocating" Program component a telephone survey of community agencies with which Atira has contact was conducted. Eight agencies, from a list provided by Atira staff, participated. Three agency representatives felt they had insufficient information to comment, and two agency representatives did not return phone calls. The survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4.

In-Depth Interviews with Past Program Participants (Case Studies)

Nine interviews were conducted with past Program participants (Appendix 5 provides the guideline used in these interviews). The plan was to interview 10 women but one woman was unable to participate in an interview at the last moment. Those interviewed represented a cross-section of Atira participants and included women from different programs and diverse backgrounds. These interviews contributed toward reinforcing and enriching data obtained from the telephone surveys. As well, case studies introduced some

additional Program attributes not addressed in the survey. Discussion of these Program aspects have been incorporated into the following chapter of this report.

EXHIBIT 3

	Participants %	Non-Participants %
Age	26.7	28.5
Number of Dependents	2.09	2.06
Grade Level	10.27	9.85
Number of Years Since Last Employed	1.75	1.13
Number of Months Worked in the Paid Labour Force	11.53	10.79
Number of Years on Social Assistance	4.27	3.38
Number of Years as Single Parent	3.82	4.03

4.0 FACTS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Before discussing the evaluation issues, and research questions and findings relevant to this study, it is important to take a closer look at the single parent women who apply to the Atira program. By focusing on the characteristics of the target population of the Atira Single Parent Program, a clearer understanding of the special issues and problems encountered by single parent women can be achieved.

On the opposite page are profiles developed of participants and non-participants - applicants who did not go on to take part in the Program . These profiles were developed from information obtained from the Program Data Review. In reviewing these profiles it is clear that characteristically, the participants and non-participants are quite similar. This is consistent with staff reports that frequently applications are not accepted into the Program "because of numbers," and not because of unsuitability.

Major difficulties the Atira Single Parent Program target group experienced in searching for, and then maintaining employment were:

- **Family responsibilities** - as single parents, who generally have at least one child under school-age, Atira applicants have experienced difficulties both in managing family responsibilities alone, and additional difficulties in coordinating family responsibilities with job search and employment activities.

- **Limited education and work experience** - Atira applicants typically left school and their parental home at an early age, often to escape physical and/or sexual abuse. Most also became parents, often single parents at an early age. As a consequence they often did not complete school, and most have no particular skills or training. About 15% of Atira participants have never worked, and many who have, took jobs that were part-time or short-term in nature and did not provided few financial and social incentives.

- **Dependency on social assistance** - in the Participant Profile presented on the opposite page, participants are reported to have worked, on average a **total** of 11.53 months. This figure represents the number of months for

which participants were actually paid. For example, if a participant worked 20 hours a week for six months, we calculated that she had accumulated 3 months of paid work experience. (Survey data, when addressing the issue of the number of months a part-time or full-time job was held looks at the length of time between when a job was obtained and maintained).

Findings and Conclusions

The remainder of this section presents the findings and conclusions with respect to each of the nine evaluation issues presented. These finding are presented within the context of specific issues or barriers experienced by the Atira target population as discussed above. The Technical Appendices, bound separately, include the one-way frequencies.

ISSUE 1: Did the Program assist Participants in:

- **Obtaining Employment?**
- **Maintaining Employment**

Conclusion

Survey data shows that 76.4% (n = 42) of surveyed respondents were previously employed but that only 3 respondents were working for pay **in the year** preceding their application to Atira. On average participants **had not been employed** outside the home for 3.83 years prior to Program participation. More than half the respondents (52.4%) had been working part-time in their last job and, 61% reported quitting their last jobs. Reasons for quitting included "child care responsibilities"', "moving" and "poor wages." Thirteen women (23.6%) had never been employed.

Some of the major contributions of Atira were in providing participants with no previous work history with the skills and training necessary to obtain employment, as well as assisting those who had not recently worked to re-enter the paid labour force. A

significant proportion of Atira participants maintained employment, and in positions that were "attractive," that is full-time positions that enabled them as sole support parent to meet their needs and the needs of their family:

- Obtaining employment - 65.9% (n = 29) participants obtained jobs within the first six months of completing the Program.
- Maintaining employment - Of the above participants, 23 are currently working and have worked continuously for periods extending from six to 30 months.
- Maintaining "attractive" employment - Of the first jobs obtained after Atira, 15 were reported to be full-time. Currently 18 women are working in full-time permanent positions, and one is working full-time temporarily.

Issue Focus

This issue addressed the primary goal of all employability enhancement projects: **Is a participant's employment potential improved as a result of Program participation?** Employment potential can be measured by examining whether participants are demonstrating a stronger employment history after participation than before. In other ERN evaluation studies "success" has been measured by a comparison of participants' employment history "6 months before" and "6 months after" training, in this way determining whether there have been any demonstrable employment-related changes. This would not be an effective measure for the Atira Program as only 3 participants were employed in the labour force in the year before.

Based on what we know about the target population of the Atira Program, we can determine whether the employment patterns demonstrated by participants after the Program are potentially successful: The Atira target group, generally has been dependent on social assistance for an extended period of time. The Program Data Review indicates participants were on social assistance for 4.27 years. In order to receive social allowances, for this length of time jobs, if held, had to have been typically casual or part-time. They may then have had no recent work experience and/or were only successful in obtaining

part-time employment. Interviews with staff, survey results and case studies indicate that some participants prefer to work part-time but overall target group members wanted to work full-time, but lacked the education, skills and work experience to obtain such employment.

We determined that a positive change therefore could be characterized by:

- A significant number of participants who entered or re-entered the labour force;
- A significant number of participants who maintained employment; (for other ERN evaluations six months has been used as a measure of success) and,
- A significant number of participants who maintained employment in more "attractive" positions - that is, either participants' first jobs after Atira were full-time positions or, they went on to obtain full-time positions.

We also determined that another method of determining "success" for participants was to compare changes in their employment patterns to those of a comparison group - Atira applicants who had **not** gone on to participate in the Program. In looking at this comparison group, it is important to note that the group was a very small one (n = 17).

Because few participants (n = 3) reported working the year before Atira, (the remaining participants either being unemployed for periods ranging from 2 to 14 years, or never having worked) the question, **"Is there a change in employment pattern for successful participants?"** will not be assessed. The long periods of time spent out of the labour force before Atira, precludes the ability to compare participants' past work history with employment obtained and maintained after Atira.

Findings

How many participants subsequently found work?

In order to qualify for the Atira Single Parent Program participants must be experiencing difficulty in maintaining full-time employment, and consequently must be receiving social assistance or be eligible to receive social assistance. Social assistance was, in fact, declared as the primary source of income for 53 participants (96.4%) in the six month period before starting the Program. (Two women declared other sources - child support, and employment). Only three women reported having worked in the year of their application to Atira. Over three-quarters of the respondents (76.4%) had worked for pay prior to Program participation, but work histories were not that recent; the average length of time that respondents had been unemployed was 3.83 years. And the average length of time participants were employed at their last job was calculated to be 20.83 months. As 52.4% reported their last job to be part-time, this last figure represents the length of time participants held their last job, and **not the total number of months of paid employment.**

It was our premise that respondents with previous work histories would experience the same inhibiting factors in obtaining/maintaining employment as the sub-group who had never worked for pay. As it was a long time since most respondents had been employed, for most re-entering the labour force was just like "starting over." This assumption was supported when participants were surveyed on barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment. More often the majority of women, irrespective of previous work histories, perceived a given factor as being a barrier to obtaining employment, rather than maintaining employment. (See Issue 3 for further discussion).

Interviews with staff and Program participants, and the telephone survey of participants indicates that primary difficulties faced by participants were in:

EXHIBIT 4

How did you find out about your first paid job after Atira?

Means	n	%
Work Experience Placement	18	38.3
Newspaper/Ads	7	14.9
Friend/Relative	6	12.8
Submitting Resumes	5	10.6
Atira Lead	4	8.5
Canada Employment Centre	2	4.3
Job Finding Club	1	2.1
Other	4	8.5

- Obtaining employment generally;
- Obtaining employment which enabled them to manage responsibilities, including financial responsibilities of being a sole support parent, and which fit their skills and career interests.

In our analysis of the research findings, we determined that the Atira Program, as well as providing academic upgrading, job search skills, and other employment-related training also directly assisted participants in helping them to obtain jobs. This is substantiated by the following results:

- Of the women (n = 47) who have been employed after the Atira Program, the majority (55.8%) obtained their first job within a month of completing; thirty participants (67.4%) obtained first jobs within six months of completing the Program; and,
- Almost half (46.8%) reported obtaining their first job through an Atira work placement or lead;
- In total, 47 women (85.5%) have obtained employment since completing the Program, including nine women who had no work history at all prior to Atira.
- Only 8 participants (14.5% of the surveyed population) have not worked since Atira.
- In the comparison group sample of 17 non-participants, 6 participants obtained employment in the 6 month period following their application to the Atira Program. This is the total number of women who obtained employment in the comparison group.

The majority who obtained employment did so within a month of completing the Program, and 67.4% were employed within 5 months of completing training. But the remaining participants who worked since the Program (n =14) obtained their first job between 10 to 34 months after Atira; the average time it took participants to obtain employment was 6.6 months. This suggests that the Program is effective in assisting participants to obtain work, immediately or shortly after attendance. The remaining participants either require

additional support/follow-up to become employment-ready, or have deferred employment plans. Survey data and in-person interviews show that reasons for delaying entry or re-entry into the paid labour force include seeking additional training/education (8 participants are currently enroled in full-time educational courses) choosing to have another child, and/or remaining at home to take care of one's children. Some women who are at home, caring for their children on a full-time basis, reported feeling they have "no choice" as they are not able to find suitable employment.

How many participants maintained employment?

Survey results indicate that the Atira Program has been effective in assisting a large proportion of participants in maintaining employment.

Of the 30 participants who reported obtaining employment within six months of Program completion:

- 22 have worked continuously since obtaining employment, the period of time having worked ranging from 6 to 30 months;
- 5 participants worked for periods longer than six months, left the paid labour force but have now returned to work; and,
- 3 participants obtained employment within 6 months of completing the Program, worked for over six months, but are presently not working.

Of the additional 17 participants who have worked since Atira but did not obtain employment within six months of completing the Program:

- 11 participants have worked continuously since obtaining employment.

A review of the comparison survey sample shows that:

- 6 participants obtained employment since applying to Atira, two of whom are currently employed. (One is employed on a full-time basis, one on a part-time basis). Periods of employment range from 1 to 6.5 months, the applicant who is now employed has worked for the longest length of time; and,

- One additional participant was employed, on a part-time basis at the time of her application. She has continued at this job in the interim.

In determining whether a participant has maintained employment, we have taken into account that participants may have left one job and immediately assumed (within 1 month) another job. We have defined this to be maintaining employment. In the telephone survey and the case studies, it became clear that participants who may have been the first to obtain employment (within six months of completing training) may also have been the first to be laid off. For example, two women who were interviewed in-person had been hired by their work experience hosts, but were soon laid off due to their lack of seniority, and in one case "when the grant ran out." Both participants went on to obtain other employment almost immediately. For the purposes of this study these participants were identified as motivated to work.

In regard to the Program's contribution toward assisting participants in obtaining and maintaining "attractive" employment, there is evidence that some participants are making a shift from employment of a casual and/or part-time nature to more permanent or full-time employment: Fifteen participants reported that their first job after Atira was full-time. Below is a summary of the employment status of the 37 participants who are currently employed.

EXHIBIT 5

Employment Status	n
Full-time Permanent	17
Full-time Temporary	1
Part-time Permanent	8
Part-time Temporary	8
Maintaining Two Jobs	3
Total	37

Is the Program success rate higher than in a comparable group?

We were unable to draw a comparison between the success rate of the Atira Single Parent Program with that of a comparable training program. In the survey of 9 local agencies, agency representatives who were familiar with Atira perceived the Program's ability to address the personal issues of participants within the context of employment training as being key to the success of the Program. The concern and commitment of staff, and staff's "reaching out" to other agencies to help address participants concerns was also noted.

There are no formal statistics maintained on the recidivism rate of single parent mothers receiving social assistance in Regina. However, representatives from the Saskatchewan Department of Social Services estimate that, without intervention, approximately 70% of single parent mothers who have, but are currently not receiving social allowances, will return to being welfare dependent.

ISSUE 2: Did the Program End/Reduce Participants' Dependence on Social Assistance?

Conclusion

Questionnaire data reveals that more than 60% of Atira participants over the six month period following the Program broke their dependence on social assistance. Recall that fifty-three - all but two surveyed participants - reported that social assistance was their primary source of income in the six month period before Atira. (The remaining two respondents reported child support payments as their main source of income). Respondents who reported on the amount of social assistance received six months after Atira compared to the amount currently received, four reported receiving more, two reported receiving less, and 12 respondents reported receiving the same amount.

Issue Focus

Dependency on social assistance is a key step toward continuous employability. This issue concentrates on whether the incidence of social assistance has declined.

Findings

Did Participants Receive Less Social Assistance After the Program than Before?

According to admission criteria, the applicant must be receiving or eligible to receive social assistance. Fifty-three - all but two surveyed participants - reported that social assistance was their **primary** source of income in the six month period before Atira. (The remaining two respondents reported child support payments as their main source of income). On average, monthly social assistance payments totalled $720.64.

At the time of the survey, 35 respondents (63.6%) reported that they had **not** received social assistance benefits in the six months following Atira. Correspondingly, 30 participants reported obtaining employment during the six month period following Atira. Fifteen of these employment situations were full-time.

Twenty respondents (36.4%) continued to receive social assistance payments in the six months following Atira. For these participants, the average amount of income assistance received, was comparable to the amount received before Atira ($720.64 monthly before/$720.64 after).

Eighteen respondents were dependent on social assistance past the six month period after they completed the Program. It should be noted that 8 of the respondents are presently enroled in full-time education programs and having chosen to defer employment earnings for what they hope will result in more substantial economic and social benefits in the long-

term.

The above findings correspond with those presented in relation to the Program's assisting participants to obtain and maintain employment (Issue 1). It is evident that in the period immediately following Program participation (in this case approximately 5 months) there is a noticeable and positive change, as the majority of participants obtain employment and become increasingly less dependent on social assistance. Following this period there is less dramatic change; similar numbers of participants are dependent on social assistance in the 6 months following the Program, and thereafter.

What was the level of assistance received by a comparable population?

As indicated above, almost two-thirds of the survey respondents were not dependent on social assistance six months after completion of Atira training. The question that remains is whether or not this change would have occurred in the absence of the Program: Comparison survey findings show that 11 (of 17) non-participants reported receiving social assistance benefits in the six months before their application to Atira, the mean amount received being $748.63 monthly. Six months following their application, 14 were receiving social allowances, the mean monthly amount being comparable to ($742.69). At the time of the survey 12 if the 17 non-participants reported currently receiving partial or full social allowance benefits, the mean monthly amount being $712.91. Because of the small number in the comparison sample of non-participants no clear conclusions can be made regarding whether these changes would have been made in the absence of the Program. If anything the comparison survey findings add further confirm the difficulties involved in single parent mothers' reducing long-term welfare dependencies.

ISSUE 3: Did the Program Strengthen Participants' Personal Sense of Employment Readiness?

Conclusion

Atira participants regarded family responsibilities, lack of experience and the ability to know what kind of job they want, and lack of job search skills as key barriers to finding employment before Atira. Study results indicate that the Program improved participants' ability to deal with these, and other barriers to finding employment.

In the survey results, participants rated barriers to obtaining employment higher than barriers to maintaining employment. This may suggest that participants, before Atira, perceived getting a job as being more of a problem than maintaining a job if such a job was secured. As participants on average had not worked for 3.83 years before Atira, their most recent experience before the Program would be in trying to obtain employment (unsuccessfully) rather than in maintaining an acquired position. Nonetheless a poor salary was reported to be a main factor in not maintaining employment that had been secured, (for 85.7% of surveyed participants), followed by family responsibilities (61.9%) and lack of training (54.8%).

The Program can be considered somewhat effective in reducing the salary barrier as it resulted in 67% of participants reporting a higher standard of income than previously achieved on social assistance. Also participants viewed Atira counselling and support, before and after Program participation as helping to deal with barriers encountered in both obtaining and maintaining employment.

Atira plays a primary role in assisting participants in furthering their education while in the Program, through preparing participants for obtaining their G.E.D. equivalency, where applicable. The Program also appears to have a real motivating effect in encouraging participants to take additional training related to employment obtained, or employment

that participants hope they will obtain. Also Atira staff assist participants in making decisions to pursue further full-time education that is, deferring the benefits of immediate employment, for what is anticipated to be greater benefits in the long-term.

Issue Focus

The barriers that prevented participants from obtaining **and** maintaining employment are clearly related: Family difficulties, limited education, training and work experience made it difficult for them to 1) obtain employment generally, and 2) obtain employment with sufficient salary and benefits to make work a realistic alternative to reliance on social assistance. Such sporadic employment histories have a negative effect on participants' perceptions of their employment readiness, in turn further hindered the likelihood of their obtaining/maintaining employment and achieving financial independence.

The high rating given family responsibilities as a barrier to employability suggests that this particular target group requires additional support in this area, if they are to become employment-ready. This assistance is provided by Atira in the form of support and practical information regarding personal family problems. As well staff assist participants in developing the necessary external supports (such as assisting participants in establishing appropriate alternate child care arrangements). Family management issues and employment issues are perceived as interrelated both by staff and participants. Being able to cope with family matters is seen as crucial to a single parent participants successfully entering or re-entering the paid labour force.

In determining whether the Program strengthened participants' personal sense of employment readiness, we addressed the effectiveness of incorporating discussion of personal and family management issues into the Atira Program generally, and the impact of this model on individual participants.

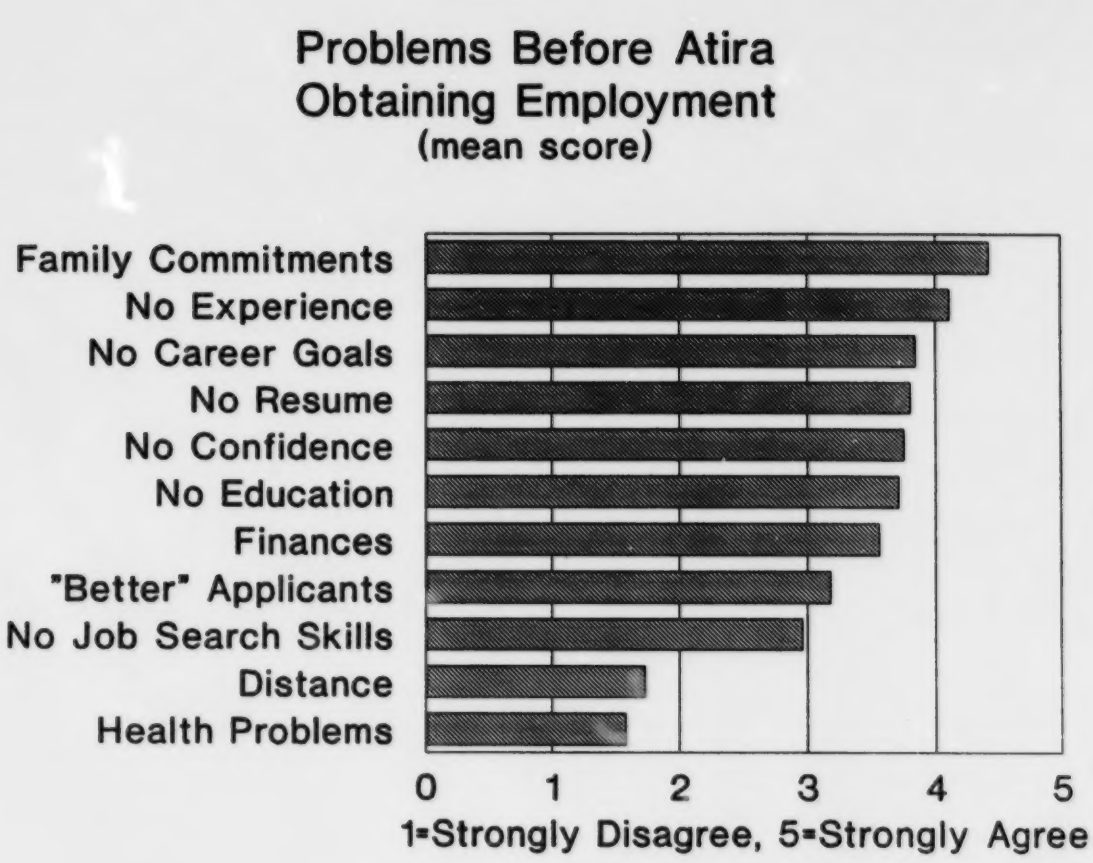

FIGURE 1

Source: Participant Telephone Survey

Findings

Do Participants Feel More Ready for Employment After Completing the Program?

We addressed this question by examining what participants perceived as barriers to finding and maintaining employment. We then examined whether the Atira Program resulted in perceived levels of improvement in these skills or factors.

We first assessed factors or skills considered to be barriers to finding employment. Figure 1, on the opposite page outlines our findings. The largest percentage of participants (90.9%) viewed "family responsibilities" as a hindrance to finding a job, followed by lack of experience (81.9%) and lack of awareness of personal job skills and interests (79.2%). The majority of participants also perceived factors related to education, confidence, resume preparation, experience, lack of awareness of personal job-related skills and interests as barriers. A small number of survey respondents perceived "health problems," (14.6%) location where interviews were held (20.0%), and job search skills (49.1%) as barriers to finding employment.

Our findings related to factors perceived as barriers to maintaining employment are highlighted in Figure 2. It is significant to note that the most frequently cited barrier to maintaining employment was the low salary received. Of the 42 respondents who had maintained employment prior to Atira, 85.7% (n = 36) perceived low pay as a barrier. To a much lesser extent, a majority of respondents cited "family responsibilities," (61.9%) lack of training (54.8%) and other "personal problems" (52.4%) as barriers to keeping the jobs they had obtained. Other skills or factors such as lack of confidence, working with others, boredom on the job, insufficient hours and work location were not regarded by the majority of respondents as barriers to maintaining employment.

It is noteworthy that greater percentages of participants identified barriers to obtaining

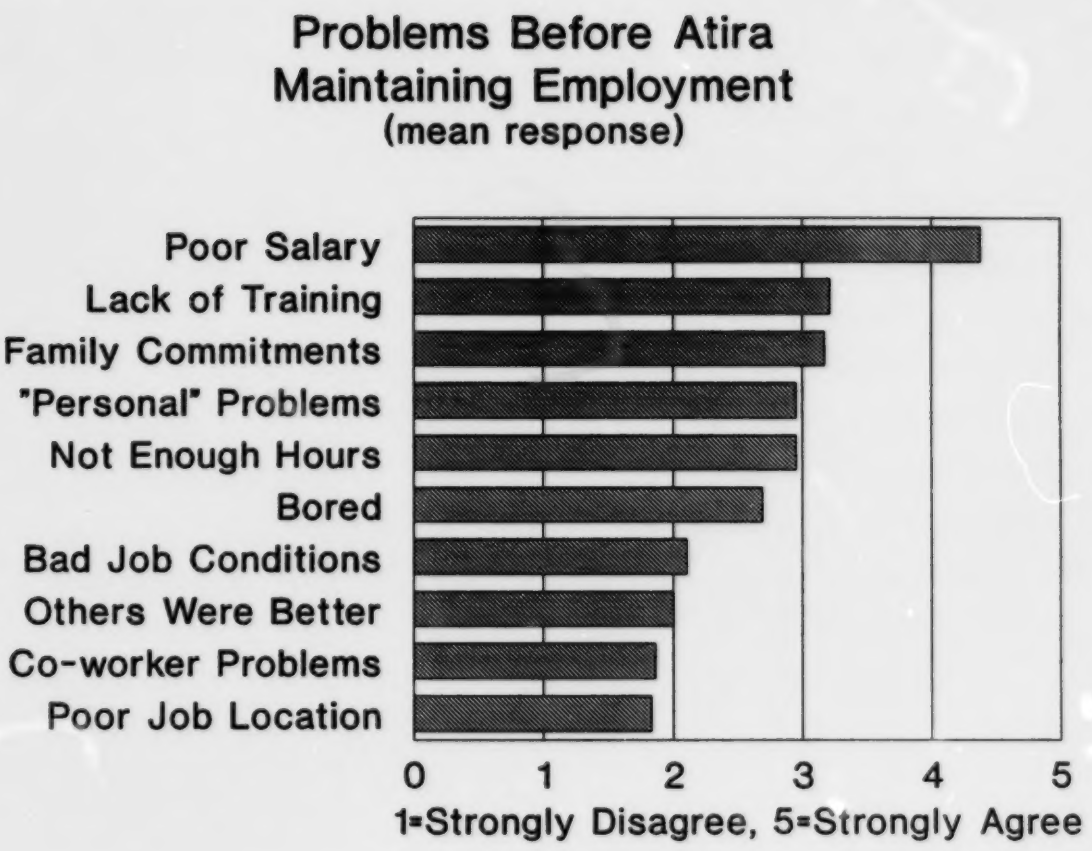

FIGURE 2

Source: Participant Telephone Survey

employment rather than maintaining employment. This finding supports our previously discussed premise that for most women one of their primary concerns on entering the Program was *"getting a job after being out of work for so long."* Perhaps one of the participants echoed the sentiment of many others when stating, *"I just wanted to get a job so badly ... I thought the rest would take care of itself."*

In order to determine whether participants perceived any improvement in the areas that were seen as inhibiting participants in obtaining and maintaining employment we assessed the responses of participants who perceived the Program as somewhat helpful (rated 3 on a 5 point scale) to very helpful (a 5 on a 5 point scale). Figure 3 outlines the percentage of participants who reported finding the Program somewhat helpful (3 on the 5 point scale) to very helpful (5 on the 5 point scale).

Over 80% of respondents reported the Program was somewhat to very helpful in addressing all cited barriers to employment. The analysis of this very favourable rating that participants gave to the Program's assisting in removing barriers to employment was done within the context of supplemental survey and in-person data. Based on this information, we believe the two factors that positively affected the above responses were:

- Participants' positive perceptions of the Program and its staff; and,
- Increased sense of self-esteem resulting from reduced dependency on social assistance and, what perceived opportunities to pursue individual career goals.

In the in-person interviews (n = 9) participants consistently discussed, without being directly probed, specific changes that they saw in themselves as a result of Program participation. In the context of changes after Atira, of the 9 participants interviewed:

- 7 reported an increased sense of self-esteem and greater assertiveness;
- 6 stated they were better able to manage family difficulties, and to access personal and professional resources to assist in family responsibilities;

- 7 stated they had a greater recognition of their individual skills and interests, and with the assistance of Atira staff were able to translate these attributes into individual career plans and goals;

- 7 mentioned greater awareness of different educational/training opportunities and of other legal and employment supports/ information of which they were previously not aware; and,

- 8 participants stated that the Program assisted them in becoming more motivated; having a had a "test of the work world" participants were motivated to pursue their vocational goals and to "not have to rely on welfare."

Interviews and the telephone survey indicate that there are some important factors that prevent some participants from maintaining employment that has been obtained following Program completion: These include:

- Lay-offs - Two participants interviewed discussed "grants running out" at their places of employment. Similarly, one other person spoke of "the reality and the insecurity of being the last hired."

- "Personal" difficulties adjusting to employment - Four respondents in the telephone survey alluded to experiencing health-related or "stress problems" and as a result, either postponing or terminating employment. Although this sub-group is small, in comparison to the total surveyed, their comments reflect the difficulties long-term social allowance recipients experience in attempts to enter the labour force.

ISSUE 4: Did the Program Improve Participants Financial Situation?

Conclusion

This program can be considered somewhat successful in raising the level of income of its participants. Of the participants surveyed (67.3%) reported their personal monthly income was **more now** than in the six months before Atira. The mean difference in income was calculated to be $489.71. The number of respondents reporting an increase in level of

income - 37 - is identical to the number who are report being currently employed. Similarly, 37 respondents stated they felt "better off financially now than in the six months immediately before Atira." The increase and the perception of over 60% of respondents that they feel financially better off after the Program can be attributed to their positive feeling of being employed in the paid labour force, increase in self-esteem, and their generally positive feelings about the Program.

Issue Focus

This issue addressed the basic question as to whether economic conditions have improved. Since the large majority were on social assistance, it would not be sufficient to merely get a job. That job must provide sufficient after tax income to offset all the additional benefits received by social assistance recipients.

Findings

Do Participants Report Any Change in Income?

Using survey data, we examined the income levels of Atira participants for three points in time:

- Six months before the Program;
- Six months after completion of the Program; and
- At the time of the survey.

Most Atira participants were eligible for or receiving social assistance prior.

EXHIBIT 6

Six Months Before	Six Months After	Current Income
$ 730.21	$ 1,020.06	$ 1,140.00

Exhibit 6 demonstrates the increase in income for the 55 participants which were included in the analysis. The total difference of over $400 represents a substantial gain in economic welfare for participants in the program.

ISSUE 5: Did the Program Strengthen Participants Self-Esteem?

Conclusion

Participants overwhelmingly reported an increased sense of self-esteem following completion of the Atira Single Parent Program. Almost 75% (74.6%) of surveyed Program participants reported that they "didn't have confidence ... when looking for iobs" before training, whereas 92.7% "felt more confident after than before training at Atira." Also all respondents agreed with the statement "I am now more able to put my best foot forward in interviews." Survey findings show that participants' heightened self-esteem has a positive impact on other aspects of their lives, including improved relationships with other family members, friends and peers, as well as in situations that are more directly related to employment. As discussed above in-person interviews provided additional support to survey results.

Issue Focus

One of the primary goals of the Atira Single Parent Program is that of enhancing the self-esteem of its participants. The low self-esteem of participants, on entering the Program is recognized to be the self-defeating effect of past histories that have included abuse,

long-term dependencies on social assistance, and limited or no experience in the paid labour force. An increased sense of self-esteem is related to participants' successes in overcoming and coping with personal/family problems, by pursing vocational (employment and educational) goals, and becoming financially independent of the welfare system. In this regard the issue of enhancement of self-esteem is not addressed through one activity or component but is addressed through the impact of the Program as a whole on participants.

Findings

Do participants "feel better" about themselves since the Program? Do participants say they feel more able to interact in work-related social situations? Did the Program have impact on family life? General life?

"Enhancing self-esteem" is not the focus of one specific Program component. Similarly it is not possible to determine whether the Program was successful in assisting participants in developing an increased self-image based on the results of a specific question or item. Consequently this issue needs to be addressed within the context of the impact of the Program as a whole on participants, recognizing that successes that participants achieve in managing family responsibilities, ending or reducing welfare dependencies, furthering educational goals - and obtaining and maintaining employment will all have a direct impact on their self-esteem.

Recognizing that the issue of self-esteem is one that is dealt with indirectly, as well as directly when discussing other issues in this study, we look further at the Program's impact on participants' self-esteem by highlighting three specific series of results:

- Participants' overall perception of improvement in skills areas;
- Additional qualitative data provided in the telephone survey; and,
- Data obtained in in-person interviews.

Perceived Improvement in Skills/Areas After Atira

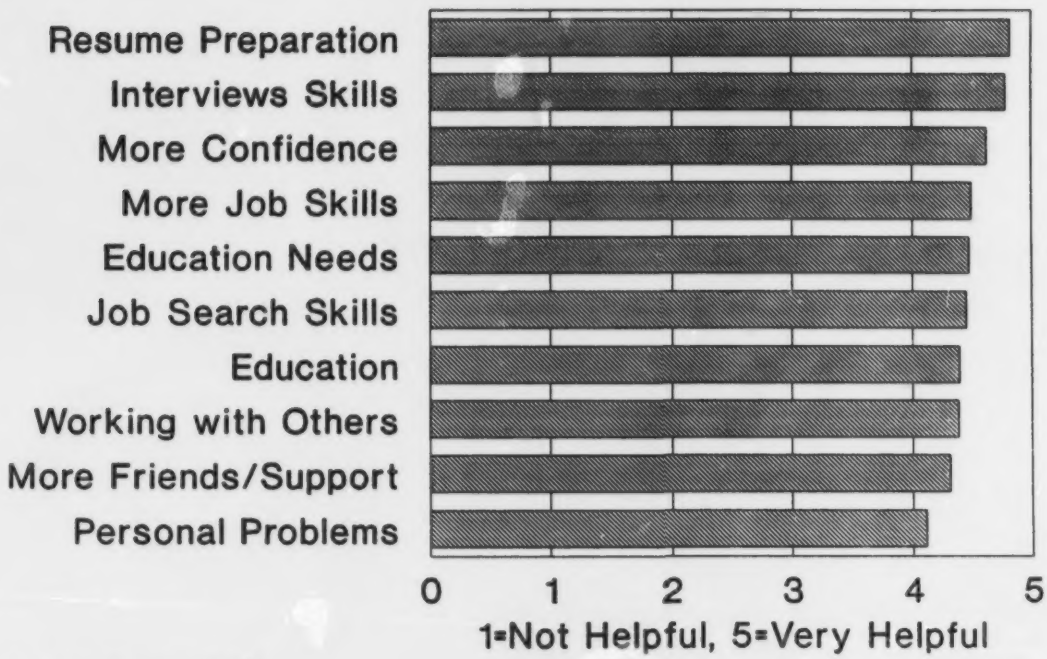

FIGURE 3

Source: Participant Telephone Survey

As is clearly shown in the above figure, participants reported notable perceived improvements in all skills and factors that are seen as inhibiting employment and achieving of career goals. Such consistently favourable ratings are seen as related to improvement of skills in the areas identified, as well an enhanced self-esteem and positive feelings about the Program. As well as providing information for specific questions, participants were eager to further discuss the impact on the Program on their self-image. In their "final comments" in the survey:

- 26 respondents spoke of the Program being confidence-building;
- 9 stated the Program assisted them in dealing with family problems;
- 9 stated the Program was supportive in general; and,
- 6 participants stated the Program was motivating for them.

As discussed previously in Issue 3, in the in-person interviews, a consistent theme that emerged was participants' feelings regarding an increased sense of self-esteem: 7 reported an increased sense of self-esteem and greater assertiveness, and 6 stated they were better able to manage family difficulties, and to access personal and professional resources to assist in family responsibilities.

ISSUE 6: Did the Program Assist Participants in Furthering their Education?

Conclusion

Based on findings from the telephone survey and in-person interviews it is evident that Atira assisted participants in obtaining their General Equivalency Diploma, Grade 12 equivalency. Also 27 respondents reported taking additional training since Atira. Seven of these respondents report this training has assisted them in obtaining employment. Ten surveyed past participants are currently enroled in educational/training programs, 8 on a

full-time basis and 2 on a part-time basis in the evening. Most of these respondents feel it may be premature to comment on how their training/educational programs will improve their employment prospects. Their intention in enroling in these programs was to gain additional long-term financial and social benefits from employment in the paid labour force.

A review of the findings of the small survey sample of non-participants (n = 17) shows that 6 of the respondents have taken other training since applying to the Atira Program. Two of these respondents stated this training has been of assistance in obtaining employment.

Issue Focus

In addressing the issue of "pursuing further education," we categorized further education into three areas:

- Attaining a Grade 12 equivalency, where applicable;
- Having taken and completed additional educational courses while in the Atira Program or after; and,
- Currently being enroled in educational courses on a part-time or full-time basis.

Atira assisted 18 participants in obtaining their Grade 12 equivalency. As well, all respondents became more aware of other educational programs in the Regina area as a result of Program participation. (Discussion and presentation of educational opportunities and programs in Regina is incorporated into the Atira Program). Information obtained in the telephone survey and case studies shows that the Program assisted participants in recognizing their individual skills and potential to succeed in specialized training, as well as in employment situations. This has resulted in a significant proportion of participants having the confidence, interest and motivation to pursue further education. In some cases,

the impact of further training/education on participants' employability is clear and measurable. In regard to other respondents, especially those currently taking full-time educational programs, the effect of such further training as it relates to employability directly, can not be adequately assessed at this point. It is anticipated that heightening of vocational goals, working toward realizing those goals is self-esteem building, in itself. In their encouraging participants to pursue further education, the intent is that such training will assists participants in getting better employment in the long-term.

Findings

How many participants furthered their education? How many participants obtained employment after receiving specialized training?

Survey findings indicate that almost one-third of the respondents (32.7% or 18 respondents) had a Grade 12 standing before beginning the Atira Program. Twenty-two surveyed participants, after preparing for writing the G.E.D. exam while at Atira, reported writing the exam and 18 (81.8%) reported receiving their G.E.D. From this finding it is evident that Atira staff assisted participants in preparing for, and obtaining their Grade 12 standing.

While participating in the Atira Program, almost half of the respondents (n = 29) reported taking outside additional courses, for which $400 per women is allocated in the budget. Tuiton fees may also be pooled to provide additional training to the women as needed (e.g. First Aid). Staff and participants report these courses are generally related to participants' vocational goals and work placements.

Following is a breakdown of courses taken while at Atira:

EXHIBIT 7

Please describe any other courses you took while at Atira.

Courses	n
Secretarial Courses	11
Bookkeeping/Accounting	4
University Courses	4
Human Services (e.g., Day Care)	4
Other	2
Total	49

This evaluation did not address whether courses taken during Atira resulted in participants obtaining employment related to those courses. For example, we did not determine whether participants who had taken office-related course(s) while at Atira had obtained office positions after completing the Program. When asked to rate the "helpfulness" of such courses in obtaining and maintaining employment participants collectively rated them "4.18" on a scale of 1 to 5.

Also, 27 (49.1%) respondents reported taking additional training since Atira. Seven of these respondents report this training has assisted them in advancing in their present employment situations. All respondents who reported benefitting from courses taken after Atira had obtained employment prior to taking additional training. In this regard, such training helped them maintain or advance in employment, rather than actually obtain employment. Six of the respondents who said that such courses have assisted them in employment situations report taking office/computer-related courses, and one is currently working in day care centre.

Ten surveyed participants are currently enroled in educational/training programs, 8 on a full-time basis and 2 on a part-time basis in the evening. Both participants who are taking part-time courses are currently working and perceive taking additional training as an opportunity to advance in those employment situations. Those enroled in full-time courses feel it may be premature to comment on how their training/educational programs will improve their employment prospects. Their intention in enroling in these programs was in the long-term, to gain additional financial and social benefits from employment in the paid labour force.

In summary, staff were seen as providing "*lots of information on what was out there,*" to consider further training as a possibility, and in some cases, "*providing the incentive to stay in school, and work at the same time.*" One participant who had a Grade 10 standing before Atira and is now completing a university degree, in summarizing her situation stated that the Program "*helped open doors, and consider opportunities that I never ever thought possible.*" Our conclusion is that Atira programming played an important role in the decision of participants to pursue further education.

ISSUE 7: What were the Costs of the Program compared to Social Assistance?

Conclusion

All program participants were eligible for or on social assistance prior to entry. Therefore, it is quite straightforward to calculate the direct benefit of Atira in terms of a specific focus on employability. The program costs are repaid in about 2 years in terms of social assistance savings alone. This does not include women who shifted from social assistance to other sources of income as a result of pursuing further training. The project director estimates the payback period to be 1.7 years is included when this reduction.

Issue Focus

A positive benefit cost ratio is important for training programs. In regard to the Atira Single Parent Program the focus on employability and job finding, must be balanced with the fact that many participants require additional training before success in the labour market can be reasonably expected.

Findings

What is the total incremental cost per participant?

What is the cost of social assistance for each successful participant?

Number of weeks required to recover the cost of a session from social assistance savings.

According to the survey administered to participants, 53 out of 55 were receiving social assistance prior to entering the program. Since qualification for social assistance is a program requirement for applicants, all participants are employment disadvantaged.

The cost of the most recent program cycle may be summarized as follows:

- Direct Administrative Cost $127,417
- Income Support $154,800
  (20 Participants x 30 weeks x $238)$282,217

Participants receive 30 weeks of support and there are 20 participants in each cycle. The incremental cost per participant is therefore $14,110.85.

This cost includes a training allowance and a childcare allowance. As well, an additional $250 per woman is allocated to provide each participant with a clothing allowance and assist with the purchase of interview clothing near the end of the course.

There is an average of 2 dependents for each participant. According to Saskatchewan social welfare, the monthly benefits for a three person household (one adult and two dependents) is $995.00 for an annual cost of $11,940 per participant.

Out of the 55 in the sample who were surveyed, 31 reported receiving work six months after the program conclusion. Some 25 reported receiving income assistance (social assistance and other) 6 months after Atira which also confirms the relative success rate for the program.

This suggests that 31/55 (56%) of program entrants receive sufficient work 6 months after the program to no longer be eligible for income assistance. The total cost of the program ($282,217) must be balanced against the cost saving in social assistance. Since 56% of program entrants obtain work within 6 months, and since total annual social assistance for a typical group of 20 participants is $238,800 (20 x 12 x $995), the annual cost saving in social welfare is projected to be $133,728. This suggests a payback period of about 2.1 years.

This payback period may be inflated for several reasons. First, there is no doubt that of those who return to social assistance after the program, some will eventually secure employment. The six month test is arbitrary. A number also undertook additional training after which employment may be secured. Atira can claim some credit for these longer term benefits. In fact, the project director estimated that the payback period was closer to 1.7 years if women who pursued further training were included.

It is also important to emphasize that the program is structured as a pre-employment training program. The objective of the project is not necessarily to secure immediate employment, but to assist women to develop the skills to secure additional training as well as find work. However, from ERN's perspective the cost/benefit issue is focused on the

clear, tangible, return on investment which in this case is in the 2.1 year range.

ISSUE 8: What Interventions Contribute Most to Increasing Employability?

Conclusion

Participants responded favourably to all Atira Program components in regard to the impact of those components on their obtaining and maintaining employment. However, program components that directly involved only Atira staff received higher ratings: Respondents viewed the "Academic Upgrading" component as the most valuable component, (4.58 on a scale of 1 to 5) followed by the "Support/follow-up" **after** training, (4.54) and "Counselling from Staff" and the "Personal Development Component (both rated 4.35).

The Academic upgrading provided was seen not only as an opportunity to attain a Grade 12 standing, but as building self-esteem. In in-person interviews participants described what they perceived as past failures in educational systems. Being shown that they had the capability to learn was self-esteem building. Also as discussed previously, Academic Upgrading for many provided the impetus to acquire further education. In additional data provided by respondents, staff generally were seen as supportive and helpful. This is reflected in the higher ratings given to those Program components related to employment or personal counselling provided by staff.

Participants were seen as less definite about the helpfulness of the "World of Work" Component (3.94) and "Support (received) from Other Women in the Program" (3.89) as they were about aspects or components of the Program.

As well, it is noteworthy that eight surveyed participants made specific positive comments about the Coordinators of the Program.

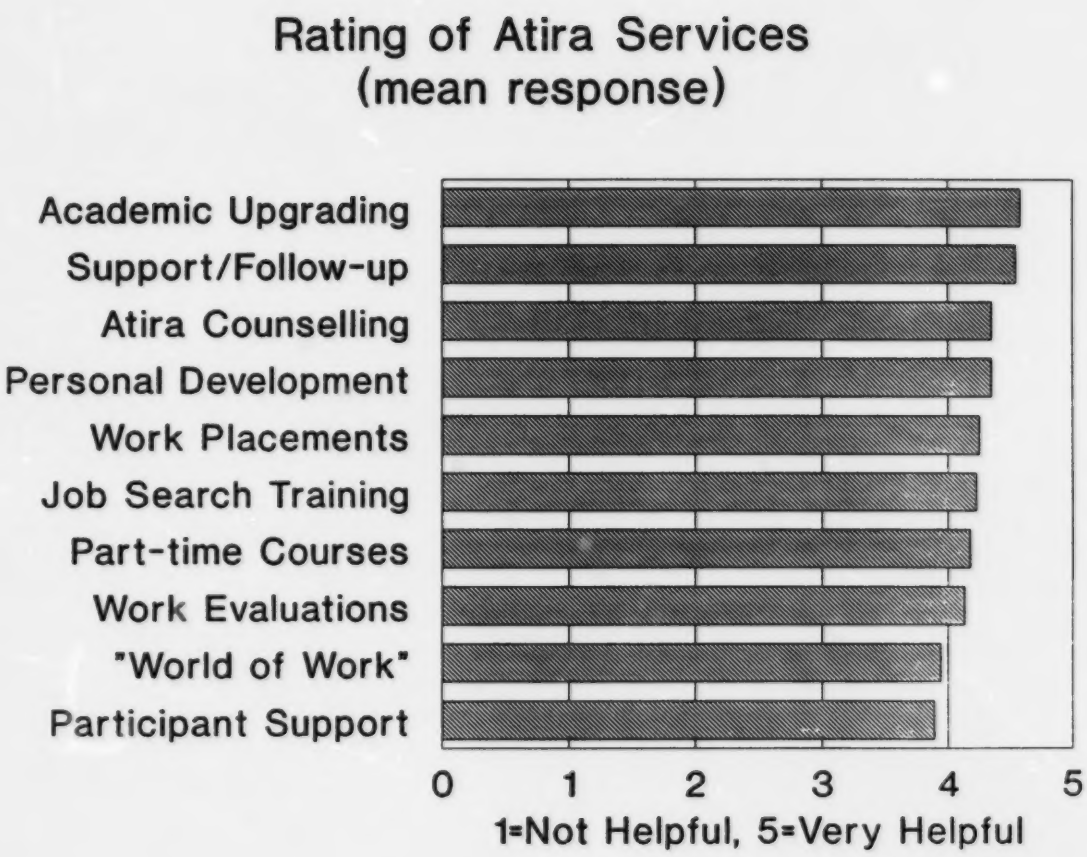

FIGURE 4

Source: Participant Telephone Survey

Issue Focus

This issue is important to Atira staff, and to others who may be planning similar programs for this particular target group - single parent women experiencing difficulty in obtaining and/or maintaining employment. In developing the Atira Single Parent Program, Atira Consulting have incorporated "personal counselling " components that address employment barriers in the context of overall personal difficulties experienced in the past. Atira also prepares participants for anticipated difficulties that inhibit single parent women, as a group, when they are seeking to obtain/maintain employment.

Findings

What elements of the program training skills do you use in your job? What skills were helpful in finding a job? Which expenses training were less useful?

In the questionnaire we divided the Program into its components and asked participants to rate them according to how helpful they were in making them more employable and/or furthering their education. On a scale of 1 to 5, "1" was not helpful and 5 being very helpful. "Structured" program components, such as Work Placements, were included as well as "informal" components such as support provided by staff and other women in the Program.

When asked to rate the services, skills, and training provided as part of the Atira Single Parent Program, participants surveyed gave "Academic Upgrading," the highest rating, (4.58) followed by "Support/follow-up (provided by staff) **after** completing the Atira Program," (4.54) and "Counselling from Staff" (while in training) and "Personal Development" (Small Group Work) Component, the latter two components both receiving a rating of 4.35. (See Figure 4)

Surveyed participants were less definite about the helpfulness of the "World of Work" Component (3.94) and "Support (received) from Other Women in the Program (3.89) as they were about aspects or components of the Program. Although we cannot say with full certainty why surveyed participants gave a lower rating to the support received from other Program participants, there is some indication that Program participants were less in need, or at least perceived themselves as being less in need of Counselling and Support than other women. In the survey 5 participants, indicated in supplemental comments made that the Program did not meet all their expectations. One participant while finding the Program was overall helpful suggested that "*while single parent women encounter a lot of difficulties the (Atira) screening process should be adjusted to insure that individuals' problems don't take over.*" Another participant who stated that while the Program "*gave me more confidence and I felt I could actually do something,*" at the same time she "*expected it to be more of a training session, rather than a counselling session.*"

One of the key distinguishing features of the Atira Single Parent Program is its addressing of employment barriers in the context of overall personal and systemic difficulties that have been experienced by participants in the past. Atira addresses difficulties that inhibit single parent women, as a group, when they are seeking to obtain/maintain employment and in this way preparing participants for anticipated difficulties. The counselling and support provided by Program staff is clearly an important and most effective component of the Program, as is the support and follow-up provided to participants who have completed training. In most cases such support is key to participants' continuing to work toward the achievement of their vocational goals. A small percentage (about 10% of survey participants) expressing that an emphasis on this component is not a priority for them suggests a need to (1) more firmly discuss the Program components with applicants at the initial Intake phase and/or (2) assess participant's preparedness and/or need to discuss family and personal issues within the context of developing vocational and employment goals.

The above observations are made with a recognition that the majority of participants appreciated the commonality of experience discovered and shared with other participants in Program group components. As one participant stated, *"there are a lot of women out there like us. This experience helps. You don't feel so alone."*

In regard to the support/counselling Program components survey results also show that 96% of respondents had contact with Atira staff after completion of the Program. The rating - the second highest - given to post-Program follow-up by participants clearly shows that this service is indeed a valuable one. In-person interviews indicate that if participants have post-Program contact with Atira, this contact tapers after about one year. This, of course is not unusual. As individuals get on with their lives, other activities become a priority. Documenting the needs of women following Program participation would be helpful in developing a clearer understanding of what is required to assist single parent women on welfare to break the tie and become financially independent.

How many participants obtained their G.E.D:

- **immediately?**
- **eventually?**

Twenty-two participants reported taking the G.E.D. exam, upon completion of Atira training, of which 18 stated they obtained their Grade 12 equivalency while in the Program or just slightly after. (Different participants write the G.E.D. exam at different times, whenever they feel confident in their knowledge and ability). The indication is that G.E.D preparation received at Atira, assists participants in attaining their Grade 12 standing. This correlation adds additional support and understanding to participants' rating of the "Academic Upgrading" component of training as the most valuable.

The Program Data Review indicated that about one-third of Program participants (32.5%) had attained a Grade 12 standing (G.E.D., or "regular" high school standing) prior to

beginning Atira training. A similar percentage, 32.7% (n = 18) of the surveyed participants reported an academic standing of Grade 12 before Atira.

ISSUE 9: Does the Program's Relationship with Other Agencies Increase its Effectiveness in Assisting Participants in Obtaining/Maintaining Employment?

Conclusion

The Program's relationship with other community agencies does not have a **direct** impact on its effectiveness in assisting participants in obtaining and maintaining employment. However the Program staff's ongoing interaction with representatives of other agencies is seen as assisting participants in developing an awareness of resources that can help in removing barriers that are directly and indirectly related to participants' attempts to deal with the difficulties of being a single parent generally. This contact may assist in realizing career plans and goals, and to become financially independent.

Issue Focus

The relationship of Atira to the social service community results in participants becoming more aware of supportive services they can access to assist them in coping with obstacles that inhibit their employability. Atira staff advocate on behalf of participants with these agencies, as well as encouraging participants to access these systems on their own. In some cases, local service agencies also provide work experience placements for participants. Although some of these same agencies also have contact with other members of the Atira target group population, there is little evidence that the referral process is a reciprocal one. That is, the indication is that there are more referrals from Atira to other agencies, than referrals from agencies to Atira. However Atira's relationship with the local agencies can be addressed in terms of the work experience placements that result - and to a greater extent, participants increased awareness of helping resources.

Findings

In the conducting the evaluation assessment of the Atira Single Parent Program, it was evident that the Atira Coordinators spent much of their time in the role of providing support and counselling to participants, both before, during and after Program participation. In fulfilling this role Coordinators frequently advocate with representatives in other social service or community systems or refer participants to social service agencies or other agencies, such as educational institutions, counselling services. As well, in the planning of training programs, Program staff have frequent contact with community agencies. Many representatives of such agencies, at the initiation of the Coordinators, attend sessions of the Atira Program, for the purpose of making participants aware of community programs and services that might assist participants in becoming "employment-ready."

In order to determine what impact Program staff's relationship with other agencies has on assisting participants in obtaining and maintaining employment, a survey of community agencies was conducted. A list of such agencies and names of representatives were provided by the Coordinators of the Atira Program. (Copies of an introductory letter sent to agencies and the survey questionnaire can be found in Appendices 2 and 3). Initially our focus was on the nature of the Atira's referral relationship with other agencies. Our survey of community agencies clearly demonstrated that the referral relationship between Atira and other community agencies is not a reciprocal one; whereas Atira staff initiate contact with other agencies on behalf of its participants (and, at times on behalf of applicants who have not been accepted into the Program), community agencies rarely refer single parent women to the Atira Program. This finding is substantiated by results of the telephone survey presented below.

EXHIBIT 8

How did you first hear about Atira?

Means	n	%
Newspaper Advertisement	31	56.4
Friend/Relative	13	23.6
Counsellor/Social Worker	11	20.0
Total	55	100.0

Staff report that the majority of applicants to the Program have had experience with the social service system in Regina, and letters are sent out to a number of social service agencies prior to the start of each recruitment process. Yet relatively few participants first heard of the Atira Program from service providers in those systems. Staff might want to consider sending out information about upcoming Programs in the form of posters that could be easily displayed in waiting room areas and offices of such social service agencies.

Although there were no questions in the telephone survey that can be directly related to the impact Atira's relationship with local service agencies participants generally or their employability specifically, consistent comments made by participants when interviewed in-person suggests that they are aware and appreciative of the opportunity to interact with representatives from other agencies:

- 6 respondents stated they were more aware of family/personal counselling services, and other family-related services (eg. day care) and now felt more comfortable accessing them on their own;
- 7 participants spoke of a greater awareness of different educational/training opportunities and of other legal and employment supports/information;
- In regard to educational opportunities in the community, 4 of the same participants spoke of previously feeling that such programs were beyond them intellectually, and financially inaccessible, but now felt that they "*were certainly within reach.*"

5.0 SUMMARY

The overall objective of the Atira Single Parent Program is "to provide single parent women with the skills and training necessary to make the transition from home and social assistance, to the workplace or educational institution." The target population of the Program then is single parent women who are social allowance recipients, or who are eligible to receive social allowances. Applicants must not be working full-time in the labour force, and must be experiencing difficulty obtaining employment.

According to Program data, characteristically Program participants are 26.7 years of age, have a grade 10 education, and 2 children. They have been single parents for 3.82 years and have been receiving social allowance benefits (in full or in part) for slightly more than 4 years. Eighty-five percent of Program participants have been previously employed, typically for short periods of time, in positions that are part-time in nature. Those participants who have been employed for pay prior to Program participation are likely to have been on average unemployed for 1.75 years. Slightly over half of Program participants are of aboriginal descent.

The Atira Single Parent Program is funded under the Canada Jobs Strategy, and is a 30 week training program which provides single parent women with the opportunity to obtain lifeskills/communication skills training, academic upgrading in Mathematics and English and G.E.D. preparation, and work experience placements. Atira staff emphasize the importance of conducting individual assessments of the women and assisting them in developing an individualized career goals. Support, counselling and advocacy are also key parts of the Atira Single Parent Program. Staff have also incorporated discussion and problem-solving that address the "personal" and "systemic" barriers encountered by single parent women entering or re-entering the labour force.

In January, 1991 an evaluation was conducted of the Atira Single Parent Program Regina.

In conducting this evaluation, data was gathered using the following methods:

- Interviews with Program staff;
- A review of the 258 of the Program's Intake "Information Sheets" completed by Program applicants;
- A telephone survey of 55 past Program participants;
- A telephone survey of 17 Program applicants who applied but did not participate in training;
- Case studies of 9 past Program participants; and,
- A telephone survey of 9 of representatives from local community agencies with whom the Program has ongoing contact.

Following is a summary of the evaluation findings, based on analysis of the data obtained from the above sources.

Atira Single Parent Program materially assisted participants in obtaining employment as well as maintaining employment. This was the case both with respect to participants who had worked previously (although only 3 respondents reported having been employed in the last year) and those with no previous work history. Of the first jobs obtained by participants after the Program, 15 were reported to be full-time.

More than 60% of Atira participants for the six month period following the Program appeared to break their dependence on social assistance. For those that continued to receive social assistance the amount did not change significantly.

Atira enhanced the ability of participants to deal with barriers to finding and maintaining employment: amount of pay, managing family responsibilities while working, and confidence. One of the unique attributes of the Atira Program is its assisting women in identifying sources of personal and professional support, and in this way preparing them

for additional barriers they may encounter when they obtain employment. Survey data and case studies consistently indicate that another valued aspect of the Atira Program is the staff's ability to "bring out the best in the women," and to translate the skills and interest into concrete vocational goals.

Atira can be considered somewhat successful in raising the level of income of its participants. Of the participants surveyed (67.3%) reported their personal monthly income was **more now** than in the six months before Atira, the mean difference being? Thirty-seven participants report currently being employed **and feeling** "better off financially now than in the six months immediately before Atira." This perception of feeling financially better off after the Program can be attributed to their positive feeling of being employed in the paid labour force - and not dependent or less dependent on social assistance - and positive feelings about the Program.

Participants overwhelmingly reported an increased sense of self-esteem following completion of the Atira Single Parent Program. This in turn has had an impact on other aspects of their lives, including improved relationships with other family members, friends and peers.

As part of their assisting participants in developing individualized career plans, staff play a significant role in assisting participants in becoming aware and pursuing further educational opportunities. Atira assisted participants in obtaining their General Equivalency Diploma, Grade 12 equivalency and in encouraging participants to take additional training during and following their completion of the Atira Program. Those who have taken additional courses, in combination with maintaining employment, at the point of this study, have recognized more benefits directly related to employment.

Since 56% of program entrants obtain work within 6 months, and since total annual social assistance for a typical group of 20 participants is $238,800 (20 x 12 x $995), the annual

cost saving in social welfare is projected to be $133,728. This suggests a payback period of about 2.1 years.

Program components that directly involved Atira staff received higher ratings: Respondents viewed the "Academic Upgrading" component as the most valuable component, followed by the "Support/follow-up" **after** training, and "Counselling from Staff" and the "Personal Development Component, the latter two components being seen as equally valuable.

The personal counselling and support provided by Atira staff during and after the Program are seen as very effective and important: Clearly some single parent women require additional support if they are to successfully enter or re-enter the paid labour force and achieve financial independence.

The Program's relationship with other community agencies was not recognized to have a **direct** impact on its effectiveness in assisting participants in obtaining and maintaining employment. However the Program staff's ongoing interaction with representatives of other agencies is seen as assisting participants in developing an awareness of resources that can be of help in removing barriers that are directly and indirectly related to participants' attempts to become financially independent.

Study results show that some participants who have obtained employment following the Program did return to being dependent on social assistance during the time covered by this study. Some returned to the paid labour force, others did not. However on social assistance they are motivated to become financially independent.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study the following recommendations are made:

- **Atira staff consider sending out "visible" information about upcoming Programs, (for example, posters) that could be easily displayed in waiting room areas and offices of social service agencies. This would provide more opportunity for women who are recipients of service from those agencies to have knowledge of the Program.**

  The number of single parent women who first heard of the Atira Program through social service agencies is relatively small. Yet it is reported that the majority of participants have had, or continue to have some contact with local social service agencies. Greater effort should be made to inform social service recipients and potential applicants about the Atira Single Parent Program.

- **That the Atira Program as part of its Intake Assessment Process continue to select women who are most in need of the "Support/Counselling" and "Personal Development" Program components, aspects of Atira that are clearly seen as valuable and effective, but components from which all participants may not be benefitting equally.**

  Counselling and support is provided to Atira participants on an individual basis, if needed. As well difficulties that inhibit single parent women, as a group, when they are seeking to obtain/maintain employment are addressed within the context of a group in the "Personal Development/Lifeskills" and "World of Work" Program components, in this way preparing participants for anticipated difficulties. This counselling and support are clearly very important. As discussed in this report, such activity is key to many participants' completing training and continuing to work toward the achievement of their vocational goals. However a small percentage (about 10% of survey participants) indicated this component was not a priority for them. This suggests a need to (1) more firmly discuss the Program components with applicants at the initial Intake phase and/or (2) assess

participant's preparedness and/or need to address family and personal issues within the context of developing vocational and employment goals.

- **That Atira examine and strengthen the Job Search component to increase the number of women who successfully obtain and maintain employment.**

The Program is successful in creating work placements which allow participants to develop and make use of their specific skills and interests. By assisting participants in developing such individualized career plans this insures their greater involvement and commitment to achieve career goals they have established. Given the difficulty experienced by some women in obtaining and maintaining employment, the Program should continue to explore ways of enhancing the job search skills of its participants who are clearly articulating a desire to work and become financially independent.

- **That as part of the support/follow-up process the Atira Single Parent Program develop a systematized method of collecting data and documenting the needs of single parent women once they have completed training.**

Over the last 25 years changes regarding assumptions about the need for mothers to stay at home, the rise in divorce rates and of "unwed mothers" keeping their children has been reflected in the dramatic growth in the number and proportion of female single parent led families. Such families are at considerable risk of poverty and dependence on social assistance. While the social and economic benefits of financial independence are widely recognized, the transition from social assistance to paid employment in the labour force still remains difficult for single mothers receiving welfare.

One of the unique strengths of the Atira Single Parent Program is that it attempts to address, in a comprehensive, supportive and practical way the barriers to financial independence that are experienced by sole support mothers receiving social assistance. It does so in a way that is responsive to local conditions and to the

needs of individual participants. The support/practical assistance provided by Atira staff are seen by participants as an important component of the Program. "Follow-up/support" being valued as the second-most important component demonstrates that the needs of many participants extend beyond the duration of the Program. More specific data about the type of assistance needed by participants once they have left the Program would provide valuable information about supports needed by sole support mothers to make the transition from social assistance to work. Which participants request support/follow-up? (for example, those who have not obtained employment and/or receiving social assistance again, women who have obtained employment?) What is the nature of the follow-up? (emotional support, practical or legal information, referrals?) And what is the time frame during participants request/need support? Such information can assist in the development of a clearer understanding of alternatives to social assistance that offer enduring employment opportunities for single parent women.

- **That project funders carefully examine the factors related to the cost per participant when reading funding decisions, and examine whether cost showing arrangements reduce the per capita costs.**

Three other projects of similar duration were evaluated by ERN, all of which had lower per capita costs than Atira. Initially, we leapt to the conclusion that this project had higher capita costs relative to the project. However, at the project coordinator's request, closer examination revealed that two other projects took advantage of some type of arrangement which resulted in a lower per capita cost (e.g. employer subsidizing work placements 100%, space-sharing etc.). With this in mind, it is important that project funders go beyond simple per capita costs as a criteria in decision-making.

APPENDIX 1

HUMAN RESOURCES OF ATIRA

HUMAN RESOURCES OF THE ATIRA SINGLE PARENT PROGRAM

The Atira Single Parent Program is jointly coordinated by the principals of Atira Consulting, Inc., a Saskatchewan-based organization specializing in women's employment and training issues. The two coordinators share responsibility for the overall operation of the Program, as well as a Resource Centre which is located on the same premises (developed to provide follow-up support to women who have participated in employability enhancement projects).

The key functions of the coordinators in relation to the administrative aspects of the Atira Single Parent Program are:

1) Establishing and maintaining an appropriate structure for the management of the Program.

2) Hiring and providing consultation to staff; evaluating staff performance.

3) Coordinating of all financial matters, including paying of salaries to staff and participants, preparing, submitting, negotiating and administrating proposals and contracts, and maintaining of financial records.

4) Conferring with funders regarding aspects of the program to insure that eligibility criteria and policies established by these bodies are being met.

5) Designing, implementing, and evaluating the Program, in collaboration with staff and participants.

More specifically the functions of the coordinators in relation to the particular program components are:

6) Development and implementation of the "World of Work" program component.

7) Developing, implementing and evaluating of all aspects of work placements,

8) Insuring the ongoing evaluation of the program by participants, and the implementation of changes as reflected in comments expressed.

9) Development and implementation of a follow-up system for former Program participants.

The functions of the coordinators, specifically in relation to Program participants are:

10) Screening and assessing candidates for the training program.

11) Supporting, counselling, and advocating with other systems on behalf of participants as needed.

12) Facilitating the development and implementation of individualized career plans, in collaboration with staff and participants.

There are some specific training or formal education that staff see as a pre-requisite for the position of coordinator. These include bookkeeping and/or accounting skills and post secondary education of a social or educational nature. Good organizational and counselling skills, and the ability to advocate for participants, in their dealings with employers and other external systems, are seen as being integral to effectively fulfilling the responsibilities of the position. A program coordinator must be able to work well in collaboration with others; the ability to work with social service systems is important. A knowledge of existent community resources, especially in relation to career training, and an appreciation of women's issues are seen as essential to the job.

The responsibilities of a **Life Skills Instructor** are:

1) Development, implementation and evaluation of the Lifeskills component of the Atira Single Parent Program.

2) Counselling and support of participants.

3) Facilitating the development and implementation of individualized career plans, in collaboration with other staff and participants.

In order to be a Life skills instructor in the Atira Single Parent Program, it is strongly recommended but not essential that the instructor has completed a Lifeskills Training Course. Experience in the area of Adult Education and program development are seen as important criteria to fulfil the responsibilities of the position. An appreciation of women's issues and issues of poverty, an ability to empathize and a non-judgemental attitude are essential to the job.

The responsibilities of a **teacher** in the Atira Single Parent Program are:

1) Assessing individual students' academic levels.

2) Providing in-class instruction, specifically Mathematics and English Upgrading, and assisting participants in preparing for taking the G.E.D. high school equivalency exam.

3) Facilitating the development and implementation of individualized career plans for participants, in collaboration with other staff and participants.

In order to teach in the Atira Single Parent Program, it is necessary, in fact to be a qualified teacher. It is also important that this teacher have knowledge and experience in the area of adult education. Sensitivity to, and an appreciation of, women's issues and poverty issues are also critical to the job.

APPENDIX 2

PARTICIPANT TELEPHONE QUESTIONNAIRE

ATIRA SINGLE PARENT PROGRAM
PARTICIPANT TELEPHONE SURVEY

ASK TO SPEAK TO PERSON NAMED ON LIST. IF NOT AVAILABLE GET A CONVENIENT TIME FOR A CALL BACK. IF YOU HAVE THE RIGHT PERSON:

Hello, my name is _____. I am calling you on behalf of Prairie Research Associates Inc. a research firm in Winnipeg. Recently you should have received a letter about a study that is being done on the Atira Single Parent Program. We are doing this study, as well as other studies on employment training programs, to see in what ways these programs can be improved. A very important part of this study involves speaking with participants to get their views about the training they received.

Can I take about 15 or 20 minutes of your time now to go through the questions. All the information you provide will be treated confidentially. Your name will not be used anywhere in the report.

If respondent agrees to be interviewed .....**GO TO SECTION A**

If respondent hesitates, ask if a time that is more convenient for him/her can be arranged?

SECTION A
EXPERIENCE BEFORE ATIRA

According to our records, you started at Atira on _____ Is this correct?

To begin, please think about what you were doing before you began at Atira.

1. As you may know most persons who are accepted into the Atira training program may have been unemployed for some time. Were you ever employed outside the home for pay before starting at Atira?

   Yes **(GO TO QUESTION 2)** 1
   No **(GO TO QUESTION 9)** 2

2. When was the last time you were employed before starting at Atira?

   _____ Years Ago

   _____ Months Ago

   NA 7

3. Was the last job you held before Atira ... **(PLEASE READ)**

Full-time employment	1
Part-time/Casual employment	2
NA	7
Don't know	8
No response	9

4. Was that job ...

Permanent	1
Temporary	2
Seasonal	3
On Call or Casual employment	4
Other (Specify) _____	5
NA	7
Don't know	8
No response	9

5. How long were you employed in this job?

_____ years or _____ months

NA	7
Don't know	8
No response	9

6. Please briefly describe this last job. **(RECORD WHAT THE PERSON DOES - NOT WHERE SHE WORKED).** _____

_____

_____

7a. How did this job end?

Quit **(GO TO QUESTION 7B)**	1
Fired	2
Laid off	3
TEMPORARY	4
Other **(SPECIFY)**_____	5
NA	7
Don't know	8
No response	9

7b. (IF QUIT) Why did you decide to quit this job (probe for reasons - didn't like job, family problems, moved away).

_____

_____

8a. Were you looking for work before being accepted into the Atira program?

Yes (GO TO QUESTION 9) 1
No (GO TO QUESTION 8B) 2
NA 7
Don't know 8
No response 9

8b. (IF NO) Why did you decide not to look for work?

_____

_____

9. People often have different problems when they are looking for work. I am going to read you a series of statements which have to do with problems you may have experienced before your starting in the Atira Single Parent Program.

As I read each statement please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or strongly disagree with that statement. Remember this is how you felt **BEFORE** your training at Atira.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	AGREE SOMEWHAT	STRONGLY AGREE	DK	NR
Before starting at Atira ...							
My education kept me from getting the jobs I wanted	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I didn't have confidence in myself when looking for jobs.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not have a resume prepared.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not know how to go about looking for a job.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not have the work experience that employers required.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I felt that other people who applied would do a better job than I.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I had no idea of what kind of job I wanted.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Family responsibilities made it difficult for me to look for employment.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Health problems made it difficult for me to look for employment.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Where I lived made it difficult for me to get to job interviews.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not have the financial means necessary to look for work. **(Ask to explain and note).**	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5	8	9

(PROBE FOR OTHER PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED AND HAVE RESPONDENT RATE).
SKIP TO QUESTION 10B IF RESPONDENT HAS NEVER WORKED

10. Often people have problems which make it difficult for them to stay at their jobs. I am going to read you some statements which describe problems you may have had **BEFORE** you started at Atira. All these statements apply to keeping jobs you had.

As I read each statement please tell me if you strongly disagree, disagree somewhat, agree somewhat or strongly agree with that statement. Again, remember this is how you felt before your training at Atira.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	AGREE SOMEWHAT	STRONGLY AGREE	DK	NR
Before starting at Atira ...							
I didn't feel I was doing as good a job as others.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I felt I wasn't getting along with co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not have the training required.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I was bored.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Family responsibilities made it difficult for me fulfil job responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other personal difficulties made it difficult for me fulfil job responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
My salary was not high enough.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I was not getting enough hours at work.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Where I lived made it difficult to get to work.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Work conditions made it difficult for me to fulfil my job responsibilities. (Probe for factors such as shift work, sexual harassment and SPECIFY _____.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other _____	1	2	3	4	5	8	9

(PROBE FOR OTHER PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED AND HAVE RESPONDENT RATE).

10B. Often people have problems which make it difficult for them to continue their education. I am going to read you some statements which describe problems you may have had **BEFORE** you started at Atira. All these statements apply to your experiences with educational programs **before** Atira. (This includes high school or any other education or training)

As I read each statement please tell me if you strongly disagree, disagree somewhat, agree somewhat or strongly agree with that statement. Again, remember this is how you felt before your training at Atira.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	AGREE SOMEWHAT	STRONGLY AGREE	DK	NR
Before starting at Atira ...							
I didn't feel I was as smart as others students.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I wasn't getting along with teachers/students.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not think an education was important.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I was bored.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Family problems made it difficult to keep my mind on school work.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other personal problems made school work difficult for me.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I needed to support myself/ my family.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other _____	1	2	3	4	5	8	9

(PROBE FOR OTHER PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED AND HAVE RESPONDENT RATE).

11. What was your personal source of income in the 6 month period before starting at Atira?

Provincial Social Allowances 1
Indian & Northern Affairs F'cial Assistance 2
U.I.C. 3
Employment Income 4
Other (SPECIFY) _____ 5

12a. Was your personal monthly income in the period six months <u>immediately before</u> your involvement with Atira more or less what it is now?
(IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS "SOMETIMES MORE OR LESS," PROBE FOR WHETHER IT WAS OVERALL MORE LESS OR THE SAME).

More 1
Less 2
Same ..... 3 SKIP TO QUESTION 14
DK 8
NR 9

12b. Can you tell me approximately how much this difference in your personal monthly income is? **(PROBE FOR AMOUNT).**

$ _____ month

NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

13. In the period six months <u>before</u> your involvement with Atira approximately how much social assistance did you receive per month?

$ _____ month

NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

14. Before starting training at Atira, what grade level had you completed?

Less than Grade 9 1
Grade 9 standing 2
Grade 10 standing 3
Grade 11 standing 4
Grade 12 standing 5
DK 8
NR 9

15. How did you first hear about Atira?

Through a friend/relative..... 1
Through my counsellor/social worker 2
Through an ad in the newspaper 3
Other _____ 4
DK 8
NR 9

SECTION B - INVOLVEMENT WITH ATIRA

16. Now I would like to turn to some questions about your experiences at Atira.

Atira offers a number of services as part of its total training program. As I read each service I would like you to rate each as to how it helped or did not help you find and keep a job, or perhaps to further your education. Please rate each basing your responses on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is "Not at all helpful," 3 is "Somewhat helpful" and 5 is very helpful. If you did not participate in a service that is mentioned please indicate that it was "not applicable."

	NOT AT ALL HELPFUL		SOMEWHAT HELPFUL		VERY HELPFUL	NA	DK	NR
Individual meetings with/ counselling from staff.	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
Support from other women in the Program.	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
Personal Development (Small Group Work).	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
Academic Upgrading (in preparation for your G.E.D. exam)	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
"World of Work" discussions and presentations (on Fridays).	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
On the job placements	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
Part-time courses (outside of Atira).	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
Work evaluation meetings (with Atira staff and employer)	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
Job Search Preparation (Training you received in how to search for a job)	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
Support/follow-up after completing the Atira program.	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
Other (specify)_____	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9

17. I am now going to read you a list of statements that have to do with whether your skills in various areas improved or did not improve because of your training at Atira. As I read each statement please tell me if you strongly disagree, disagree somewhat, agree somewhat or strongly agree with that statement.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	AGREE SOMEWHAT	STRONGLY AGREE	DK	NR
I felt more confident after, than before training at Atira.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I am now more aware of what education I need to get a good job.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I am now better able to outline my skills and abilities in my resumes	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I am more able to put my best foot forward in interviews.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I am more aware of how and where to look for jobs.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Atira has helped me improve my educational standing.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I have more skills to offer an employer.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I feel more comfortable interacting with customers/co-workers/ fellow students.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I am more able to handle personal and family difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I have more friends/supports now than I had before.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other (Specify) _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5	8	9

18. Please briefly describe any courses you took while at Atira._____

_____

_____

19. Do you have any other comments regarding Atira?

_____

_____

SECTION C - EXPERIENCE AFTER ATIRA

Now think about the time since you left Atira.

20a. Since leaving Atira, have you taken the provincial G.E.D exam (to obtain your high school equivalency)?

Yes (GO TO Q20B) 1
No (GO TO Q21A)..... 2
NA 7
No Response 9

20b. Have you obtained your Grade 12 high school standing since Atira?

Yes (GO TO Q20C) 1
No (GO TO Q21A) 2
NA 7
No response 9

20c. When did you receive your high school equivalency?

_____month _____year

NA 7
Don't know 8
No response 9

21a. Have you taken additional training since leaving Atira?

Yes (GO TO Q21B) 1
No (GO TO Q22) 2
DK 8
NR 9

21b. Has this training assisted you in obtaining employment?

Yes 1
No 2
NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

If yes, please explain. _____

_____

_____

21c. Are you currently enroled in any education or training programs?

Yes (GO TO Q21D) 1
No (GO TO Q22) 2
NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

21d. Is this program ....

Part-time during day 1
Part-time during evening 2
Full-time 3
NA 7
NR 9

22. Have you been employed at any time since completing training at Atira?

Yes 1
No (GO TO Q30) 2
DK 8
NR 9

23. How did you find out about your <u>first</u> paid job after completing training at Atira?

Work experience placement 01
Canada Employment Centre 02
Job finding club 03
Friend or relative 04
Through the newspaper or other employer advertisements. 05
Sent resumes/Knocked on doors 06
Atira lead 07
Other (SPECIFY) _____ 08
NA 77
DK 88
NR 99

24. How many jobs have you had since completing training at Atira?

One 1
Two 2
Three or more 3
NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

25. **Are you currently employed in a paid job outside the home?**

Yes	1
No	2
NA	7
DK	8
NR	9

QUESTIONS 26 THROUGH 30 RELATE TO THE LAST THREE JOBS HELD BY THE RESPONDENT SINCE COMPLETING THE ATIRA TRAINING PROGRAM.

ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR THE RESPONDENT'S LAST OR CURRENT JOB AND THEN GO BACK TO THE RESPONDENT'S PREVIOUS TO JOBS OR LAST JOB, AS APPLICABLE.

Now think about your....

	Last/Current Job	Job Before Last	Third Last Job
26. Was this job:	Full time 1 Part time 2 NA 7 DK 8 NR 9	Full Time 1 Part Time 2 NA 7 DK 8 NR 9	Full Time 1 Part Time 2 NA 7 DK 8 NR 9
27. Was it:	Permanent 1 Temporary 2 Seasonal 3 On Call/ Casual 4 DK 8 NR 9	Permanent 1 Temporary 2 Seasonal 3 On Call/ Casual 4 DK 8 NR 9	Permanent 1 Temporary 2 Seasonal 3 On Call/ Casual 4 DK 8 NR 9
28. What period were you employed	_____ MO 19___ to _____ MO 19___	_____ MO 19___ to _____ MO 19___	_____ MO 19___ to _____ MO 19___
29. What was your wage?	$_____ hrly/wkly/mth	$_____ hrly/wkly/mth	$_____ hrly/wkly/mth

For the purpose of the study it is important that I ask you some questions specifically related to the 6 months immediately after your involvement with Atira.

30a. Was your average monthly income in the six month period following Atira mor less than what it is now? (IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS "SOMETIMES MORE OR LESS," PROBE FOR WHETHER IT WAS OVERALL MORE, LESS OR THE SAME).

More	1	
Less	2	
Same	3	SKIP TO QUESTION 31A
DK	8	
NR	9	

30b. Can you tell me approximately how much this difference in your personal monthly income is? (PROBE FOR AMOUNT).

$ _____ month

NA	7
DK	8
NR	9

31a. In the six month period after your involvement with Atira were you receiving any social assistance?

Yes	1	
No	2	SKIP TO QUESTION 32
DK	8	
NR	9	

31b. Approximately how much did you receive?

$ _____ month

NA	7
DK	8
NR	9

31c. Was the amount more or less than the amount you are receiving now?

More	1
Less	2
Same	3
NA	7
DK	8
NR	9

32. Overall, thinking about your personal income and what it costs you to live - do you feel better off financially now than in the six months immediately before Atira?

Better off now	1
Better off before	2
DK	8
NR	9

33. Briefly describe what effect the Atira Program has had on you and your family.

_____

_____

_____

34. Do you have any final comments that you would like to make?

_____

_____

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

APPENDIX 3

NON-PARTICIPANT TELEPHONE QUESTIONNAIRE

ATIRA SINGLE PARENT PROGRAM
NON-PARTICIPANT TELEPHONE SURVEY

ASK TO SPEAK TO PERSON NAMED ON LIST. IF NOT AVAILABLE GET A CONVENIENT TIME FOR A CALL BACK. IF YOU HAVE THE RIGHT PERSON:

Hello, my name is _____. I am calling you on behalf of Prairie Research Associates Inc. a research firm in Winnipeg. Recently you should have received a letter about a study that is being done on the Atira Single Parent Program. We are doing this study, as well as other studies on employment training programs, to see in what ways these programs can be improved. A very important part of this study involves speaking with Program participants, as well as women who applied, but did not participate in the Atira training program.

Can I take about 15 or 20 minutes of your time now to go through the questions. All the information you provide will be treated confidentially. Your name will not be used anywhere in the report.

If respondent agrees to be interviewed .....GO TO SECTION A

If respondent hesitates, ask if a time that is more convenient for him/her can be arranged?

SECTION A
EXPERIENCE BEFORE APPLYING TO ATIRA

According to our records, you applied to Atira in _____ Is this correct? **PLEASE NOTE DATE AND REFER TO THIS DATE WHEREVER APPLICABLE THROUGHOUT SURVEY.**

To begin, please think about what you were doing before you applied to Atira, that is before _____ (month/year respondent applied to Atira).

1. Were you ever employed outside the home for pay before _____?

Yes (GO TO QUESTION 2) 1
No (GO TO QUESTION 9) 2

2. When was the last time you were employed before _____ ?

_____ Years Ago

_____ Months Ago

NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

3. Was that last job before _____ ?
(PLEASE READ)

Full-time employment 1
Part-time/Casual employment 2
NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

4. Was that job ...

Permanent 1
Temporary 2
Seasonal 3
On Call or Casual employment 4
Other (SPECIFY) _____ 5
NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

5. How long were you employed in this job?

_____ years or _____ months

NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

6. Please briefly describe this last job. (RECORD WHAT THE PERSON DOES - NOT WHERE SHE WORKED.)

_____

_____

7a. How did this job end?

Quit (GO TO QUESTION 7B) 1
Fired 2
Laid off 3
TEMPORARY 4
Other (Specify) 5

_____

NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

7b. (IF QUIT) Why did you decide to quit this job (probe for reasons - didn't like job, family problems, moved away).

_____

_____

_____

8. **People often have different problems when they are looking for work. I am going to read you a series of statements which have to do with problems you may have experienced before _____ (month/year applied to Atira).**

As I read each statement please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or strongly disagree with that statement. Remember this is how you felt BEFORE _____ (month/year respondent applied to Atira).

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	AGREE SOMEWHAT	STRONGLY AGREE	DK	NR
Before _____ (date/year respondent applied to Atira).							
My education kept me from getting the jobs I wanted	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I didn't have confidence in myself when looking for jobs.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not have a resume prepared.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not know how to go about looking for a job.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not have the work experience employers required.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I felt that other people who applied would do a better job than I.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I had no idea of what kind of job I wanted.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Family responsibilities made it difficult for me to look for employment.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Health problems made it difficult for me to look for employment.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Where I lived made it difficult for me to get to job interviews.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not have the financial means necessary to look for work. (Ask to explain and note).	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other _____	1	2	3	4	5	8	9

SKIP TO QUESTION 9B IF RESPONDENT HAS NEVER WORKED

9a. Often people have problems which make it difficult for them to stay at their jobs. I am going to read you some statements which describe problems you may have in jobs obtained BEFORE _____. (Month/year applied at Atira).

As I read each statement please tell me if you strongly disagree, disagree somewhat, agree somewhat or strongly agree with that statement. Again, remember this is how you felt before _____ (month/year applied at Atira).

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	AGREE SOMEWHAT	STRONGLY AGREE	DK	NR
Before _____ ...							
I didn't feel I was doing as good a job as others.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I felt I wasn't getting along with co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not have the training required.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I was bored.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Family responsibilities made it difficult for me fulfil job responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other personal difficulties made it difficult for me fulfil job responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I felt my salary was not high enough.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I was not getting enough hours at work.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Where I lived made it difficult to get to work.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Work conditions made it difficult for me to fulfil my job responsibilities. (Probe for factors such as shift work, sexual harassment and SPECIFY _____.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other _____	1	2	3	4	5	8	9

9B. **Often people have problems which make it difficult for them to continue their education. I am going to read you some statements which describe problems you may have had BEFORE you started at Atira. All these statements apply to your experiences with educational progress before Atira. (This includes high school or any other education or training)**

As I read each statement please tell me if you strongly disagree, disagree somewhat, agree somewhat or strongly agree with that statement. Again, remember this is how you felt before your training at Atira.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	AGREE SOMEWHAT	STRONGLY AGREE	DK	NR
Before starting at Atira ...							
I didn't feel I was as smart as others students.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I wasn't getting along with teachers/students.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I did not think an education was important.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I was bored.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Family problems made it difficult to keep my mind on school work.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other personal problems made school work difficult for me.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
I needed to support myself/ my family.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
Other _____	1	2	3	4	5	8	9

(PROBE FOR OTHER PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED AND HAVE RESPONDENT RATE).

10. What was your personal source of income in the 6 month period before applying to Atira?

Provincial Social Allowances	1
Indian & Northern Affairs Fin'l Assistance	2
U.I.C.	3
Employment Income	4
Other (Specify) _____	5
DK	8
NR	9

11a. Was your personal monthly income in the period six months <u>immediately before</u> _____ (applying to Atira) more or less than what it is now? (IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS "SOMETIMES MORE OR LESS," PROBE FOR WHETHER IT WAS OVERALL MORE OR LESS THE SAME).

More	1	
Less	2	
Same	3	SKIP TO QUESTION 13
DK	8	
NR	9	

11b. Can you tell me approximately how much this difference in your personal monthly income is? (PROBE FOR AMOUNT).

$ _____ month

NA	7
DK	8
NR	9

12. In the period six months <u>before</u> _____ (applying to Atira) approximately how much social assistance did you receive per month?

$ _____ month

DK	8
NR	9

13. Before applying to Atira, what grade level had you completed?

Less than Grade 9	1
Grade 9 standing	2
Grade 10 standing	3
Grade 11 standing	4
Grade 12 standing	5
DK	8
NR	9

SECTION B - INVOLVEMENT WITH ATIRA

Now I would like to turn to some questions about your application to Atira.

14. **How did you first hear about Atira?**

Through a friend/relative	1
Through my counsellor/social worker	2
Through an ad in the newspaper	3
Other _____	4
DK	8
NR	9

15. **Why did you decide to apply to the Atira Program?**

_____

_____

_____

DK	8
NR	9

16. **What reasons were you given for not being accepted? (If respondent states she was not given reasons, ask why she thinks she was not accepted).**

_____

_____

_____

DK	8
NR	9

SECTION C - EXPERIENCE AFTER APPLICATION TO ATIRA

Now think about the time since _____ (since respondent applied to Atira).

17a. Since you applied to Atira, have you participated in any other training or educational programs?

Yes (GO TO Q17B) 1
No (GO TO Q18)..... 2
DK 8
NR 9

17b. What type of program have you participated in?

High school upgrading 1
University (Specify) 2
_____
Employment training (Specify) 3
_____
Other training (Specify) 4
_____
NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

17c. Has this training assisted you in obtaining employment?

Yes 1
No 2
NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

Please explain. _____
_____
_____

17d. Has this training assisted you in furthering your education?

Yes 1
No 2
NA 7
DK 8
NR 9

Please explain. _____
_____
_____

18. Have you been employed at any time since _____ ? (month/year respondent applied to Atira).

Yes (GO TO Q19) 1
No (GO TO Q27) 2
DK 8
NR 9

19. Are you currently employed in a paid job outside the home?

Yes 1
No (GO TO Q24)..... 2
DK 8
NR 9

20. Is this job ...
(PLEASE READ)

Full-time employment 1
Part-time/Casual employment 2
NA 7
Don't know 8
No response 9

21. Is this job ...

Permanent 1
Temporary 2
Seasonal 3
On Call or Casual employment 4
Other (Specify) _____ 5
NA 7
Don't know 8
No response 9

22. How long have you been employed in this job?

_____ years or _____ months

NA 7
Don't know 8
No response 9

23. Please briefly describe this last job. (RECORD WHAT THE PERSON DOES - NOT WHERE SHE WORKED, TRY TO GET WAGE EARNED ETC.). _____

_____

_____

24. **How many jobs, including your present job, if you are currently working, have you had since _____? (since applying to Atira).**

One	1
Two	2
Three or more	3
NA	7
DK	8
NR	9

25. **Briefly describe those jobs you have held since _____ (since applying to Atira).** _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(PROBE TO DETERMINE WHETHER JOBS WERE FULL-TIME, PART-TIME, TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT, SALARY EARNED, WHY RESPONDENT LEFT PREVIOUS JOBS HELD).

For the purpose of the study it is important that I ask you some questions specifically related to the 6 months immediately <u>after</u> _____ (month/year applied to Atira).

26a. **Was your average monthly income in the six month period following _____ _____ (month/year applied to Atira) more or less than what it is now? (IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS "SOMETIMES MORE OR LESS," PROBE FOR WHETHER IT WAS OVERALL MORE, LESS OR THE SAME).**

More	1	
Less	2	
Same	3	**SKIP TO QUESTION 28**
DK	8	
NR	9	

26b. **Can you tell me approximately how much this difference in your personal monthly income is? (PROBE FOR AMOUNT).**

$ _____ month

NA	7
DK	8
NR	9

27a. In the six month period <u>after your application</u> to Atira were you receiving any social assistance?

Yes	1	
No	2	SKIP TO QUESTION 29
DK	8	
NR	9	

27b. Approximately how much did you receive?

$ _____ month

NA	7
DK	8
NR	9

27c. Was the amount more or less than the amount you are receiving now?

More	1
Less	2
Same	3
NA	7
DK	8
NR	9

28. Overall, thinking about your personal income and what it costs you to live, do you feel better off financially now than in the six months <u>before</u> _____ ? (before application to Atira).

Better off now	1
Better off before	2
DK	8
NR	9

29. Do you have any final comments that you would like to make?

_____

_____

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

APPENDIX 4

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE AGENCIES

COMMUNITY AGENCIES QUESTIONNAIRE

ATIRA SINGLE PARENT PROGRAM

1. Briefly describe the services or programs provided by your organization or agency.

2. What are the circumstances around which you might have contact with the Atira Single Parent Program? **(PROBE TO SEE WHO INITIATES CONTACT, WHETHER CONTACT IS IN REGARD TO REFERRALS, ATIRA ADVOCATING WITH OTHER AGENCIES ON BEHALF OF PARTICIPANTS, MAKING PRESENTATIONS AS PART OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM ETC.).**

3. **IF AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES MAKE REFERRALS TO THE PROGRAM,** ask them to describe why they might make a referral to Atira, what skills women referred are expected to acquire if accepted into the Program, what is expected of Atira staff. What contact is there with Atira regarding referrals made, both those that are accepted and those that are not? What contact is there before referrals are made? What contact is there after referrals are made?

4. If agency does not make referrals, but is in a position to do so, check to determine why this is not being done.

5. Please briefly describe any contact you might have with Atira staff during the course of the Program regarding a woman who is accepted into the Atira Program. Regarding a woman who is not accepted into the Program. **(PROBE TO SEE WHETHER AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE IS AWARE OF WHETHER WOMEN ARE PARTICIPANTS OR NON-PARTICIPANTS, AND WHETHER THE NATURE/CIRCUMSTANCES OF CONTACT IS DIFFERENT).**

6. Do you have direct contact with participants while they are in the Atira training program? If so, briefly describe any contact you might have while participants are in Atira. **ASK RESPONDENTS TO ELABORATE ON NATURE OF CONTACT OR WHY THERE IS NO FURTHER CONTACT.**

7. Based on your experiences with Atira and its participants, what do you see as some of the unique problems experienced by the participants? What are some of the unique attributes that Atira participants might possess?

8. If respondent is from an educational facility ... what are some of the unique difficulties/attributes that an Atira participant might bring into the classroom? What is their level of performance compared to students from other training programs? Compared to the general student population?

9. Do you have direct contact with participants after they have completed the Atira program? If so, briefly describe. Generally, what are participants' perceptions of the training program, and its impact on their lives? What are the respondents' perceptions of the training program and its impact on Program participants? Does the Program have different impact on different women?

10. If agency representatives have experience/contact with other training programs ... ask to briefly describe some of the comparisons/differences between Atira and other training programs with which agency might get involved. If agency makes referrals to other training programs, under what circumstances might they refer single parent women to a training program other than Atira.

11. Do you have any other thoughts or comments?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

APPENDIX 5

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

IN-PERSON INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

ATIRA SINGLE PARENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

1. Tell me about your life before you applied to participate in the Atira Single Parent Program.

2. Were you ever employed? What types of jobs did you apply for? What types of jobs were you successful in getting? What was it like being a single parent, and having to manage work and child care responsibilities?

   (If never employed) how did you occupy your time?

3. What was involved in your decision to apply to the Atira Single Parent Program? What did your family/friends think of the idea?

4. What did you expect from the Program? Was the Program what you expected it to be? What was it like to go back into a classroom situation? What was it like compared to your past school experiences?

5. Tell me about your particular career plan. (That was developed in collaboration with Atira staff). How did you decide what your goals would be?

6. Did you participate in work placements while you were at Atira? Where did you want to be placed on a work experience? Why? Where were(was) your work placement(s) like? Was there a possibility of being employed there? (If not working there) Is it the type of job you would like? Why?

7. Did your career plan include taking any courses outside of Atira? What courses did you take?

8. What parts of the program were most helpful to you personally? Why? What parts of the Program were least helpful? What aspects of the Program stand out most in your mind?

9. What have you been doing since you completed the Atira Program? Are you working? Going to school? Taking care of your family?

10. (If working) Is this the type of employment you expected when you started at the Centre? Is this the type of work you expect to be doing a year from now? Five years from now?

11. (If going to school) What are you taking in school? How did you decide? What are you hoping to do when you complete your studies?

12. Do you think you have changed between when you started and completed the Atira Program How? Do you think you have changed any since completing the Program? How? What impact has your participation in the Atira Program had on your family? On your other relationships?

13. Do you still have contact with Atira? With other participants from the Program?

14. If a friend or relative asked you about the Atira Program, what would be the most important things you would tell them? Have you recommended Atira to anyone?

15. Any other comments? Suggestions?